

THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES

by Sarah Chamberlain

“Anything you can do I can do better, Anything I can do better than you.” Iconic lyrics by Irving Berlin from “Annie Get Your Gun”.

Who would dream that this song would become the battle cry of the dumbest tennis match in the history of the sport: The battle of the sexes between Bobby Riggs and Billie Jean King. Riggs claimed that his superior play, even at age 55, could beat the top seed female player, at the time, Billie Jean King. King declined to play so another top player, Margaret Court stepped in to play in the best of 3 matches. She was beaten handily by Riggs in two sets 6-1, 6-2. The date, May 13, 1973.

King wasn't done. He kept needling and cajoling and finally got King to accept with a winner take all (\$100,000) match with the best of 5 matches.

The Match: The Place: The Houston Astrodome. The Date: September 20, 1973. Court was beaten because she came into the net for the soft shots and was unable to return the long lobs due to position. King learned from Court's defeat and was prepared.

The Match: The Buildup: King was carried into the arena as if she was Cleopatra by bare chested men, the equivalent of Roman slaves and Riggs was pulled into the dome by Rickshaw and several scantily clad models.

She stayed deep in the baseline zone and returned most of Riggs lobs. She won in three straight sets, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3. There were critics who claimed Riggs threw the match but the fact remains that King was prepared, and Riggs did not take King seriously and he should have.

1985: The stupidity continues. Bobby Riggs teamed with top 20 seeded player Vitas Gerulaitis in a doubles match with Martina Navratilova and Pam Shriver. Bobby Riggs was 67, more than twice the age of Navratilova and Shriver combined. Sports writer Mike Penner of the *Los Angeles Times* stated that “Bobby Riggs was shackled to the ankle of Navratilova” and that “John McEnroe at the top of his game would have lost with Riggs as his partner.”

1992: Yet another battle involving Martina Navratilova and Jimmy Connors.

Connors called the match “war” and she called it a battle of egos. Connors beat Navratilova, even with modified rules to give her a chance, but she was beaten in the best 2 of 3 with 7-5 and 6-2.

The Williams sisters issued a challenge to play and beat anyone ranked 200 or higher. Karsten Braasch was ranked 203 and beat both sisters, Venus 6-2 and Serena 6-1.

In 2013, Andy Murray responded to a Twitter question as to if he would accept a challenge to play Serena Williams and he answered yes. Serena said sure, it would be fun, she may not get any points, but it would be fun.

Ah, the battle of the sexes, like the Energizer Bunny, goes on and on and on and ...