

# Russian Tennis Star Maria Sharapova Headed to Finals at Brisbane

January 09, 2015



Maria Sharapova of Russia poses for a picture with fans after defeating Elina Svitolina of Ukraine in their women's singles semi final match at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane, Jan. 9, 2015.

BRISBANE — Russia's Maria Sharapova won her semi-final at the Brisbane International on Friday to set up a highly-anticipated showdown with Ana Ivanovic of Serbia in the lead-up to this month's Australian Open.

Sharapova beat the talented Ukrainian Elina Svitolina 6-1 6-3 to reach the final without dropping a set while Ivanovic battled her way to a 7-6(2) 6-4 victory over American Varvara Lepchenko in her semi-final.

Sharapova beat Ivanovic in the 2008 Australian Open final and both women are in devastating form heading towards the first grand slam of the season, starting in Melbourne on Jan. 19.

Sharapova has dropped just nine games in her three matches to get to the final and showed no mercy against Svitolina, a rising star who won the 2010 junior French Open, as she reached

her 56th WTA final.

"I expected her to play well. I think I did a lot of things good to try to take away her game," Sharapova said.

"In the end, it became a little bit more difficult. She became more free, went for her shots a little bit, a few unforced errors from my end, but overall I'm happy I stuck with it and finished the last point," Sharapova said.

Ivanovic, who came from a set down to win her previous match, once again had to dig deep before seeing off Lepchenko after nearly two hours on the Pat Rafter Arena.

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