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Security Attacks

### Serena's on court outburst exploited by malware

The on-court outburst of World No. 2 WTA player Serena Williams during the recently concluded US Open Women's semifinal didn't just cost her a big fine, it caused some PC users a lot of grief in the form of malware.

People searching online for website links and video of Williams, who had a heated altercation with a line judge and made verbal threats that led to a game-ending point deduction; were met with fake antivirus pop-up windows reporting that the user's computer is infected and needs to download a program to fix the problem.

Downloading this program, titled setup\_build7\_195.exe actually installs malware that corrupts the host system. Symantec's security response blog offers more details about the nature of this attack.

According to Hon Lau, senior security response manager at Symantec, "Unwary visitors to this site will instantly see browser windows pop-up warning them of various security threats, before being offered the chance to download a program that will fix them. They should refuse this as this is fake antivirus software that could harm their computers."

"This attack, otherwise known as 'SEO poisoning' is exactly the kind of thing that opportunistic criminals do to take advantage of people's natural curiosity," continued Hon. "It is a small attack at the moment, but serves to show how dangerous misleading applications can be. They might look like legitimate software, but they're there to harvest your personal details and hold your computer to ransom." He warns that, unless Web users want to put themselves at risk of identity theft or fund organized crime, they're advised to stay well away from such sites.

The popularity of tennis players has been a documented bait-tactic for malware and virus programmers. Some of the more notorious incidents involved the Anna Kournikova virus, which triggered a malicious script when opening e-mails promising photos of the player were circulated. Former top seed Maria Sharapova's popularity has also been a used by malware authors offering screensaver applications that actually install a host of viruses on host computers.

According to Symantec, "the scale of this SEO poisoning attack is quite small but this incident serves as a reminder to computer users to keep security systems running and up-to-date."

More than anything, this is a wake-up call for users to be mindful of their online habits and avoid installing programs from sources they aren't familiar with or trust.

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Security Attacks

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