

Sam's ready to flex her muscle



Power play: Samantha Stosur looking fit and strong and (below) putting in the hard yards training in Sydney

Pictures: Getty Images/Brett Costello

Amanda Lulham

BICEPS and a big serve are the not-so-subtle weapons Australian Sam Stosur will rely on as she prepares to challenge the top echelons of the women's game at the US Open from Monday.

The rapidly rising star from the Gold Coast has turned heads all season with an impressive physique and fitness which has helped her power up the ranking to her current seeding of 15th in the world.

"For sure it helps, it's something I have been working on for a long time," said Stosur, who trains under the guidance of noted trainer Giselle Martin and who recently showed off her fitness during a training session in Sydney with fellow Australian tennis players.

"I think as time has gone on my base fitness has got a lot better and now I'm being able to hold that.

"It definitely plays a part in me playing well. I'm an aggressive player and I take a lot out of



my body when I play so the fitter I am the stronger I am, the better I can play for sure."

Courtesy of her improved ranking, Stosur has been drawn against Japan's Ai Sugiyama in the first round of the US Open, which starts Monday, and she

appears destined to reach the last 16 provided she maintains her current strong form.

If Stosur, renowned for her powerful serve and forehand, wins through, the 25-year-old Australian is projected to meet defending US Open champion

and second seed Serena Williams — a woman she beat just a month ago in a major tournament, in the fourth round of the championship.

Stosur, a French Open semi-finalist, indicated earlier this month she believes she can be a contender at the US Open after claiming the scalps of numerous top seeds this season and showing significant improvement in all aspects of her game.

And the big-hitting Australian is also hopeful of more than exceeding her early-season goal of making the top 20 — she is currently 15th — by cracking the top 10 by the finish of the year.

Stosur, a first-round loser at last year's US Open who started the year ranked 52nd, believes her cut body and extraordinary game fitness is not her only strength heading into this year's tournament.

"I think a major change this year is my belief in myself," she said. "I think that self-belief is a huge part of why I've been able to turn things around."