

TENNIS legend Venus Williams rolled back the years to light up the opening day of the LTA's Rothesay Classic Birmingham with an enthralling three-set victory over Italian Camila Giorgi. The seven-time Grand Slam singles champion, 43, was a wildcard entry to the tournament and booked her place in the second round with a battling 7-6(5) 4-6 7-6(6) win over the world No.48. And she said: "I am just so happy to be back.

"I haven't been here in a few years, and not because I didn't want to be, but because I wasn't really on tour.

"I played so well today, she also played incredibly. There were so many times when I thought the match was over and she would hit a shot from out of nowhere.

"She pushed me to be better than what I thought I could be. It's great for me, I haven't played a lot of matches and it is great to come through."

Williams will be joined in the second round by fifth seed Anhelina Kalinina, who beat American Alycia Parks 6-4 6-4 to set up a date with either Harriet Dart or Jodie Burrage, who face off in an all-British battle tomorrow.

Both Dart and Burrage were beaten finalists at the LTA's Rothesay Open Nottingham on Sunday as Dart and Heather Watson lost in the women's doubles final and Burrage suffered a defeat in another all-British affair against Katie Boulter, who claimed her first WTA Tour title with victory. Elsewhere in Birmingham, world No.20 Magda Linette also booked her place in the next round after coming back from a set down to beat Jasmine Paolini 3-6 7-5 6-4.

And Polish star Linette, 31, said: "It was a tough one. I think Jasmine played a very high level, so I am glad in the second set I managed to be at my best.

"It is never easy to be one set down, especially on grass when things happen very quickly."

Third-seed Linette could face Boulter, who soared to British No.1 for the first time in her career after her run to the semi-finals of the LTA's Lexus Surbiton Trophy, in the next round if she is able to beat China's Lin Zhu.

Elsewhere, Bernarda Pera got past Marie Bouzkova 6-4 7-6(3), while compatriot Caty McNally beat fellow American Lauren Davis 6-1 7-5 and Linda Fruhvirtova beat wildcard Elina Svitolina 6-2 6-0.