

May 11, 2009

## Oudin takes long road to win

Georgia native grabs three-set MIMA triumph

BY MIKE CHERRY  
FLORIDA TODAY



Melanie Oudin probably already knows this, but it is not all glamour and glitz on the women's pro tennis circuit.

About 9 p.m. Sunday night, a little more than two hours after she claimed the championship at the fourth MIMA Foundation/USTA Pro Tennis Classic at the Kiwi Tennis Club, Oudin was traveling along I-95 with her coach on the way to the Atlanta area. The estimated arrival back home was about 2 a.m.

Oudin claimed she is a good car sleeper, something she will need after being pushed for the only time in the singles portion of the \$50,000 tournament. The top seed from Marietta, Ga., nonetheless prevailed over tiring No. 8 seed Laura Siegemund 7-5, 5-7, 6-2 on a sultry Mother's Day afternoon in a match that took 3 hours and 18 minutes to complete before about 300 fans.

"I don't feel like I played my best tennis today," Oudin said. "I hadn't been in a final in a while. I was tight. I wasn't hitting through the ball and got a little down on myself."

The promising 17-year-old captured her second pro title, the other coming last summer in a \$50,000 event in Lexington, Ky. The title was Oudin's first on clay. She will rest today, then travel to another \$50,000 clay event in Raleigh, N.C., before flying overseas for French Open qualifying. Oudin also took a winner's check for \$7,315 with her on the drive north.

"It definitely helps my confidence," said Oudin, who is No. 151 in the world rankings.

The tournament's other title was taken by the fourth-seeded doubles team of Heidi El Tabakh and Melanie Klaffner. They defeated Tetiana Luzhanska and Lilia Osterloh 6-3, 3-6, (10-7) and will split the \$2,940 first prize.

That match was played at a brisk pace in comparison to the singles final, which also included a 10-minute break before the final set. Both players seemingly spent as much time toweling off as they did hitting the ball in the hot, humid conditions.

Oudin, who lost one singles set all tournament, appeared the fresher of the two for much of the match. Siegemund, a native of Germany, had survived a three-set semifinal with Alison Riske and another earlier in the tournament.

"I had five hours more on the court than her," Siegemund said. "I played a great match. If I had more energy, I had a good chance to win it."

Perhaps in part out of necessity after Saturday's long semifinal, Siegemund, 21, played at a deliberate pace. She once had a point taken from her after a second warning for taking too much time between points.

"I shouldn't have let it get to me," Oudin said. "It seemed like our match went so long for no reason sometimes. There was a lot of waiting and I was ready to play."

"At the moment, I'm frustrated," Siegemund said. "In an hour, maybe analyzing it tomorrow, I'll see it was a good match. The problem was with stamina, but not my game."

After trailing 5-3, the hard-hitting Oudin was fortunate to survive the first set. Siegemund closed the second with a well-placed drop volley. Oudin, however, broke Siegemund's serve the final two times in the third set, the final time for the match when a Siegemund shot landed wide.

"A win is a win," Oudin said. "I pulled it out."