

Doubles win seals U.S. win at Fed Cup in Surprise

by **Mark Brown** - Feb. 8, 2009 08:36 PM
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Melanie Oudin set up the knockout punch, and the American doubles team of Liezel Huber and Julie Ditty delivered the crushing blow.

Huber and Ditty broke a 2-2 tie, defeating the Argentina team of Betina Jozami and Gisela Dulko 6-2, 6-3, and pushing the United States into the semifinal round of the Fed Cup with a 3-2 victory over Argentina.



Associated Press

Melanie Oudin of the United States celebrates her 2-6, 6-1, 6-2 win over Betina Jozami of Argentina in a Fed Cup match Sunday, Feb. 8, 2009, in Surprise.

The Americans now take on the Czech Republic, winners of their quarterfinal match against Spain on April 25-26, at a site in the Czech Republic.

Oudin, a 17-year-old from Marietta, Ga., faced the daunting task of winning or watching the U.S. say goodbye to its Fed Cup hopes this year. Going against Jozami, the Americans were down 2-1. Oudin promptly dropped the first set, but she rallied and pulled out a 2-6, 6-1, 6-2 win at the Surprise Tennis and Racquet Complex.

"I had some pressure, because if I didn't win, we, as a team, lost," Oudin said. "Yeah, this was one of my biggest moments, because I was not playing for me but for my country."

At the start, things appeared bleak. Toward the end of the opening set she was more aggressive, winning the seventh game to reach 2-5, but she dropped the final game at deuce.

That's when things turned dramatically. From that point, she allowed Jozami only three games in the remaining two sets and weathered a 30-minute rain delay in the second set to record her first Fed Cup win. Oudin's rally placed the Americans in position to challenge.

Oudin's win put the doubles team of Huber, a native of South Africa who gained U.S. citizenship in 2007, and Ditty, a last-minute addition to the American team, in a position to advance. Huber entered the match as the No. 1 doubles player in the world, and U.S. captain Mary Joe Fernandez selected Ditty, a 30-year-old from Atlanta, as her partner.

"We wanted this to come down to the doubles," Fernandez said. "I have all the confidence in the world in Huber. Julie played was aggressive, and that pair made it happen."

The Huber-Ditty team was never in trouble. Huber, at 5 feet 11, positioned herself at the net, and managed to reach nearly everything in site.

"Last year, I watched the U.S. lose in the Fed Cup and said this will not happen again," Huber said. "This is a very proud day in my history book."

Earlier, Dulko, No. 44 in the world, gave Argentina a 2-1 team lead when the 24-year-old took out Jill Craybas of the U.S. 6-1, 6-3.

"I thought I played much better than (Saturday)," Dulko said. "I was a little nervous at first, but thought I handled it well. I was very aggressive, and that's my game. The aggressive game was working well, and I went for it."