

Semi-Local Lulu Sun Advances to Singles Final and Will Face Yuliia Starodubtseva Sunday At TaliMar Rancho Santa Fe Open

Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. – October 14, 2023 – TaliMar Rancho Santa Fe Open Tournament Director John Chanfreau was a little surprised when a week ago Monday – 12 days ago – women's professional tennis player Lulu Sun called the Rancho Santa Fe Tennis Club and asked if she could head on over and begin practice.

Chanfreau reminded Sun from Switzerland that the tournament was the following week, at which time Sun explained her brother is a professional golfer who lives in North San Diego County and she had arrived early to visit him.

"I said sure, and we put her on Court 1 in the middle of the day when the club was kind of quiet," said Chanfreau, the RSF Tennis Club General Manager who brought the USTA Women's Pro Circuit \$60,000 tourney to the club three years ago. "She said she was, 'Kind of a local.'"

The New Zealand native Sun confirmed her brother Ethan Hoffmann is on the minor league PGA golf circuit and who, like her, is trying to make it on the highest level of the professional tour of his sport.

Sun ended up shooting a promo video for the tournament that Wednesday and Chanfreau invited her to play in a doubles exhibition on Friday night that kicked off the tournament.

All the extra practice and good media karma last week did great things for the lefty Sun as Saturday she advanced to the singles final at the TaliMar RSF Open where she will face Ukraine's Yuliia Starodubtseva Sunday at 12 noon.

The No. 8 seeded Sun beat No. 7 Russian Tatiana Tikhonova, 6-3, 6-2, and will meet No. 4 Starodubtseva, who downed USC junior and qualifier Snow Han in similar fashion, 6-3, 6-4, in the day's first semifinal.

The former University of Texas Longhorn Sun exacted revenge from a 2019 junior match at the Australia Open where she lost to Tikhonova in the quarterfinals. "I just remember it was a long and close match, so I knew I had to fight through because we had both improved so much since then," Sun said.

Starodubtseva later in the day advanced to the doubles final with Makenna Jones as the pairing will face Tatiana Prozorova and former USC standout Madison Sieg following the singles. Starodubtseva, who has her degree in Communications and a Master's in Sports Management from Old Dominion University in Virginia, couldn't recall a time even as a young junior when she played in both the singles and doubles final. "At least I know I never won both on the same day," she said.

On Sunday, she'll get that chance.

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