

FLEISHMAN STAYS ON ROLL

[City Edition]

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WOMEN'S TENNIS STATE CLAY COURT

What's it going to take to derail Nataly Fleishman in the McDonald's State Clay Court Tennis Championships?

The top seed from Norfolk has rolled into the final with the loss of only two games in three matches.

"She's such a nightmare to play," one competitor said after watching Fleishman dismantle No. 4 seed Lindsey Wyeth 6-0, 6-0 yesterday in the semifinals at Salisbury Country Club. Fleishman rarely missed a shot, firing winners into all parts of the court.

It took Fleishman less than an hour to eliminate Wyeth, who tried everything she could think of to disrupt her opponent. Nothing worked.

"I tried coming to the net," Wyeth said. "That didn't work. I tried serving and volleying. That didn't work. I tried high, loopy balls. That didn't work. It's funny. I didn't make too many unforced errors. Maybe a couple. Every point she won, she hit a winner.

"There wasn't much I could do. I tried to put the pressure on her, but the more you put the pressure on her, the more she likes it."

Second-seeded Lindsey Howard will get her chance to slow down the former Old Dominion University ace in today's 1 p.m. final. Howard earned a berth in the title match by rallying for a 2-6, 6-2, 6-3 victory over No. 3 Rachel Gale.

"I played her after my freshman year in high school," Howard said of her loss to Fleishman in the State tournament final at Raintree three years ago. "She's really good. We'll see what happens this time."

Howard, who hasn't been playing as much as usual this summer after graduating from Mills Godwin High last month and getting ready for the University of Michigan in the fall, struggled for a while against Gale, winner of the city tournament two weeks ago.

"My legs felt tired in the first set and Rachel was playing awesome," Howard said. "She was moving me around. Running me from side to side. Drop shotting me. I wasn't bending my knees enough. After the first set, I just let it go and started all over."

Howard began to find the range more often with her strong ground strokes in the second set, and Gale committed a few more unforced errors.

"I got up early [4-1 lead] on her in the second set and that helped," Howard said. "I think I stepped it up a little bit and stopped missing as much. I felt a little better in the second set, and I was moving a little bit better."

Howard is using tournaments such as this to prepare herself for college tennis.

"I'm not really taking that much of a break," she said. "I'm not traveling as much as I used to in the summer. I like playing these tournaments around here."

In the women's doubles final, the top-seeded pair of Gale and Julie Kaczmarek defeated the No. 2 duo of Howard and Kate Harrington 6-1, 6-3. Gale and Kaczmarek split the top prize of \$2,000.

Credit: Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

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