



Central Coast Tennis Classic
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Top-Seeded American Taylor Townsend and No. 8 Renata Zarazua From Mexico To Clash in Templeton Final

TEMPLETON, Calif. – Sept. 30, 2023 – Top-seed Taylor Townsend will seek her 13th career ITF singles title – and first this year – as she advanced to the final of the **EPIC Central Coast Tennis Classic** at the Templeton Tennis Ranch on Saturday.

Townsend will face Mexico's No. 8 seed Renata Zarazua in the Sunday final of the fifth annual event to be played following the 11 a.m. doubles final.

In Saturday's first semifinal, Zarazua defeated Iryna Shymanovich 6-3 6-4. The hard-fought match took over an hour and 40 minutes. Zarazua took an early 5-0 lead in the first, but Shymanovich came back to get on the board and win two more games in the opening set. She started strong in the second set but began to struggle as Zarazua regained her energy and focus, getting every ball back and moving around seemingly effortlessly.

Zarazua played a strong defensive game with lots of variation, forcing the Belarusian into uncomfortable positions. Taking a moment for the changeover down 3-4 after losing her second set lead, Shymanovich tossed her racket in frustration.

The victory means a lot to Zarazua who exited in the first round here last year, incidentally on her birthday, which she celebrated again today. Reflecting on what makes the difference, she described the importance of mentality saying, "We are out here playing tennis so it's such a nice thing to do," she said. "I think last year I was a little bit in a panic every time I was going to the court."

Wind was a big factor in today's matches. Following her victory, the 26-year-old said. "It's so hard to figure it out, so I just tried to put the ball in the middle of the court and put the problem on the other person."

In the second match on Stadium Court, Townsend defeated American wild-card McCartney Kessler, 7-5 6-4. The 27-year-old mother made note of the squirrely wind as well as the drop in temperature today, wearing long sleeves under her tennis dress and noting, "I barely got any free points on my serves. I really had to work hard on all of my service games so it was pretty difficult."

She described the ball feeling heavier than earlier in the week and added, "The ball's moving a lot more through the court today."

The top-seed gave credit to her opponent, who made a deep run from her wild card entry, saying, "she put a lot of pressure on me to close out. I thought that I did a really good job of focusing when it was time to play solid points."

Townsend and Zarazua will play their third match in the singles final, the American leads the head-to-head 2-0. Her team will review tournament footage to develop a game plan, but that can only do so much in tennis. In her words, "It's always different. You can watch how someone played in one place, but it can be completely different the following week."

The birthday girl described a similar approach, saying, "You've got to play your game, play what's better for you more than looking at the other player."

The two finalists are in top form this week and the clash between the two tour veterans promises top-notch tennis.

The all-American doubles final will open up play on Sunday at 11 a.m. featuring four with college tennis ties. Former North Carolina Tar Heel Jessie Aney has paired up with Jaeda Daniel, who played at rival N.C. State. They will take on former Florida All-American McCartney Kessler and Alana Smith, who also played for N.C. State.

- *By Anita Stahl*

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