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Spotlight - Jennifer Elie - April 2012

SPOTLIGHT By Nick Fishpool
ON...
Jennifer Elie (USA)

April 2012

This month saw the first three Venezuelan ITF Pro Circuit tournaments of the year take place. Competing in these events, all at the Centro Nacional de Tenis site, was American Jennifer Elie and she is our featured player for the month.

Elie, 25, had peaked at a career high WTA singles ranking of 311 during the course of 2010 but coming into this month she was yet to claim a first singles title, this, however, was about to change.

Seeded second for the opening tournament of this trilogy, Elie comfortably saw off the challenges of three South American players in the opening rounds including a 62 61 quarterfinal win over Maria Andrea Cardenas who would later partner Elie in the second tournament.

Elie's semifinal match against fellow American Nicole Robinson was cut short during the second set with Elie leading 61 3-0. The retirement of Robinson sent Elie through to her first singles final of the year, and a first final since 2009, in which she was to face another American, number three seed Lauren Albanese.

Once the final got underway Elie did not have long to wait to claim her first professional singles title as she raced to a 61 62 win.

In the second tournament here, Elie was again named as the second seed and this time she also entered into the doubles event where she partnered Venezuela's Maria Andrea Cardenas.

The opening two rounds saw Elie eliminate two Venezuelan qualifiers in straight sets which she followed up with a 62 62 quarterfinal defeat of Marcela-Guimaraes from Brazil.

That quarterfinal win brought about a semifinal encounter which was to be a re-match of the previous week's final as her opponent was Lauren Albanese. Seeded fourth this time, Albanese was looking to avenge her final defeat and appeared on course to do so when she took the first set 64.

Having dropped her first set of the month, Elie hit back to level the match with a 63 second set win and then pushed on to claim the win with the loss of just two games in the deciding set.

For the second tournament running the final was to be contested by the second and third seeds. Elie's opponent in the title match was Caracas resident Marina Giral Lores.

The final was to be another three set battle for Elie. Having taken the opening set 64 the American then won only two games as she dropped her second set of the week.

A tense final set ensued and Elie, having waited so long for a first title, found herself ending the hopes of the support for the local girl and claiming back-to-back titles with a 64 26 64 triumph.

The day prior to her singles final triumph Elie and partner Cardenas took the doubles crown as an unseeded pairing who were playing together for only the first time.

Now looking to make it a hat trick of singles titles here in Caracas, Elie went into the third tournament unseeded and entered only into the singles event. The previous two tournaments had both been at the \$10,000 prize money level but this was in the next grade up at \$25,000.

Elie got off to a near perfect start winning 60 61 against Italian Lara Rafful but then in the second round her tournament was brought to an end in a straight sets 64 63 loss to seventh seed Mailen Auroux from Argentina.

Despite this early exit this will be a month always remembered by the 25-year-old American. Not only did she claim a career fourth doubles title – also her first since 2008 – but she also picked up her first two ITF Pro Circuit singles titles.

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