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## THE 2009 WPBA US OPEN 9 BALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

### Semifinal #2

Story and Photos by Anne Craig – WPBA



**Ga Young Kim**

VS.



**Gerda Hofstatter**

August 1, 2009: Riverwind Casino, Norman Oklahoma –

Gerda Hofstatter hasn't won an event since the year 2000, but has given herself every opportunity and has been featured in many TV matches since then. Ga Young Kim was looking for her first win since 2007 and has also reached the TV rounds once this year already. Both come into this Semi Final match playing nearly flawless pool.

Ga Young Kim won the lag and with her usual aggressive style, busted up the rack with all her strength... perhaps too much strength as she sent the cue ball flying off the table. Giving Gerda ball in hand in the first rack is painful, especially when Gerda took advantage of the gift by running out to take the 1<sup>st</sup> game. Gerda broke in game two but failed to pocket a ball, leaving a tough shot for Ga Young who made the 1 for great shape on the two down table. Everyone gasped as Ga Young missed a relatively easy 2 ball shot, leaving Gerda to play a safety. Ga Young could see the ball and locked the cue ball up snug against the 7 and the audience applauded the brilliant safe. Gerda aimed 2 very short rails for a kick which was successful, leaving Ga Young with an open but tough shot. Both players seemed unsettled and Ga Young missed it, sitting down in her chair disgusted with herself. The safety play continued on between the two competitors. In the end, Ga Young pocketed the 9 ball off of a thin cut on the 2 ball, leaving a long straight in shot on the 2 which she made to get back into position for the rest of the rack. Ga Young ran out to tie the match up at 1 all.

Ga Young broke but made nothing and Gerda had an open table to run out with no real problem areas to speak of. She carefully navigated her way around the rack but failed to pocket the 7 ball. Ga Young was left with a side bank which she executed perfectly to run out and take game 3, going up 2-1. Gerda failed to pocket a ball on her break but Ga Young was forced to play a safe. Gerda opted to tie up several object balls by pushing the 5 down table, clustering it with 3 other balls including the 1. It was an ugly situation as Steve called out "10 seconds" and Ga Young took her extension to carefully survey the situation. Her choice was to nick the 1 and hide the cue ball, but Gerda did have a return safety opportunity. She left Ga Young with a tough open shot that she made but she missed the 2 as the audience groaned. Gerda once again was forced to intentionally foul by pushing the 3 ball into the 2, which she couldn't see. Ga Young made the two, broke out the 3 from the 4 and methodically picked her way through each shot. Her pace quickened as each ball fell until she was two-stroking comfortably and took game 4, up 3-1.

## Semi Finals #2 – 2009 US Open - continued

Game 5 saw Ga Young with the break and she did make a ball; she was left with a long shot on the 1 ball which she missed, leaving Gerda with an open shot and a chance to get back to within one. Her shape to the 5 ball landed straight on, but she was able to cheat the pocket enough to create an angle for a long shot on the 5. It landed in the pocket with a satisfying thud, with great position for the 6. Her angle to the 8 ball was more than she'd liked, and she nip/stunned the cue ball to hold it for shape on the 9 but missed the 8 leaving it hanging in the corner pocket. Frankly, she got very lucky as the cue ball came to rest behind the 9 and Ga Young fouled as she missed the 8 using her jump cue. Gerda knew she was fortunate to have another opportunity and finished off the rack, still down 2-3.

Gerda had the break in game 6 and although she made a ball, the table layout included a nasty lie on the 2 ball which sat on the rail just below the side pocket with the 5 above and the 6 to its side, leaving only a thin line of angle to make it. Gerda took her extension for a long, tough shot on the 1 which she made. Her safety attempt was less than stellar although she didn't leave Ga Young with an easy shot. The two began the cat & mouse game of safety play on the stubborn ball. Ga Young left Gerda a tough cut on the 2, but Gerda also saw the carom opportunity on the 9. After taking a long hard look at it, she hit the 2 perfectly, and the cue careened off of it, sending the 9 into the other corner pocket as the crowd cheered, tying up the match at 3 all.

Ga Young came up empty off of her break, but the layout was ugly! Gerda chose to try a safe, leaving Ga Young a jacked up shot for the 1 ball. She missed it, and after Gerda left the cue ball behind a cluster, Ga Young was forced to jump. She did hit the ball but left an open shot for Gerda, which she failed to pocket. Once again Ga Young brought out the jump stick, nearly pocketing the ball but once again leaving a tough open shot. Gerda perhaps made a poor choice in shots by attempting a strange carom off of the 1 ball sitting in the middle of the table. The cue ball came off of the one, down towards the 9 but she hit it poorly and ended up scratching off of the 9. Ga Young gained ball in hand but immediately got out of line and had to scramble with some shot-making. Her shape to the 4 was horrible, but she got lucky after missing it in the corner the ball went across table and back into the same corner pocket she was aiming at. Her focus seemed off as she nicked the 9 ball after making the 8 in the side, sending the 9 to the 1<sup>st</sup> dot on the bottom rail but she stepped up and banked the 9 on the long rail to take the lead back, 4-3.

Gerda had the break in game 8, pocketing a ball and attempting a 1/7 combo which was her only option. She missed but the 7 came back to rest up on the 1, and Ga Young could only see half the 1 ball. She played a pretty soft masse shot, making the 1/7 combination with an open shot back on the 1. She proceeded to run out, hitting each ball with authority. Her position to the 9 was less than ideal but she made the ball none-the-less, taking a 2 game lead 5-3 and would go into game 9 with the break.

Ga Young pocketed a ball and had a wide open table layout. She ended up underneath the 2 ball and made a long 2/9 combination to polish off that game quickly, reaching the hill up 6-3. With the crowd encouraging "Go Gerda!" Gerda stepped up and broke, making a ball. She was forced to push out though, leaving a very long almost straight in shot on the 1 for Ga Young's option. As offensive a player as Ga Young is, there was little doubt she'd accept the challenge but surprisingly, she played it smart, giving it back to Gerda. She rattled the ball as the crowd groaned but the layout was tough for Ga Young as the two played a short cat and mouse game on the 2 ball. Ga Young struck the 2, nearly pocketing it but Gerda had the open shot, making it but snookering herself behind the 7 for the 5. She played a perfect one rail kick shot, making the 5 in the side but missed the 6 as the crowd groaned and gasped. She left Ga Young hooked again, and the audience oohed and aahed as she kicked at the 6, nearly making it AND the 9 ball in the corner, but neither fell and Gerda had yet another opportunity to get back to within two games. She made a great shot on the 8 with perfect position on the 9 and the score was now 6-4, Ga Young.

Ga Young broke in game 11, pocketing 2 balls. Jeanette Lee, who was sitting nearby me, described the out that Ga Young had, and Ga Young obliged by following the path that Jeanette described for each ball. Within a matter of a few shots, Ga Young was shooting the 8 into the side and the 9 in the corner to advance to her 2<sup>nd</sup> finals of 2009!