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WPBA TOUR CHAMPIONSHIPS RACE TO THE FINISH LINE

SEMIFINALS #1



Vivian Villarreal

vs.



Monica Webb

November 16, 2008 – Hollywood, Florida: Seminole Hard Rock & Casino and the Hard Rock Live

There are four competitors left in this year's WPBA Tour Championships and three out of the four are American Players, so it's guaranteed that we'll have one American competitor in the finals. It's been many years since an American has won the coveted National Tour Championships title, while it's been nearly 10 years since Vivian Villarreal has won any title, and her opponent in this first semi-final match, Monica Webb has yet to capture her first WPBA win on tour.

The stakes were high for both players but the added pressure was squarely on Vivian's shoulders as she's playing in front of her home crowd and in her Sponsor's arena!

Monica won the lag and we were off and running. With her powerful break, Monica struck the rack and scratched in the side pocket. Vivian took ball in hand and started her run for the finals in earnest. She was forced to go for a 5/8 combination and with the crowds' gasp, just barely missed it. Monica stepped up and ran the rack to take the first game of the match, 1-0.

Vivian's break has been off & on all tournament, and it let her down again as she failed to pocket a ball on her break. Monica was forced to play a safety though, which she executed well. Vivian kicked one rail and successfully hit the ball and left Monica with a short jump shot. She pocketed the ball perfectly and left herself great position on the two. Playing with a lot of focus and determination, Monica methodically picked her way around the rack, sinking all 9 balls in short order to take a 2-0 lead and went into game 3 with the break. After pocketing a ball, Monica began her run out looking to secure a 3 game advantage. She overshot her mark playing position to the 3 ball and was left with a long cut down to the corner pocket the full length of the table which she sank dead center into the pocket to continue her runout. Once again overshooting the mark on shape, she attempted a jacked up draw shot on the 6 into the side but the 6 jumped off of the point. Luck was on her side though as the cue ball came to rest behind the 8 and the 6 ball ended up

mid-table blocked from view. Vivian kicked one long rail and did hit the ball but left Monica a shot and that was all it took for Monica to finish off the game.

Vivian's break just wasn't working and she didn't make a ball. Monica wasn't left with a viable shot and played a safety. Vivian could see the 1 ball to play a return safety but completely whiffed the ball. The pressure must be so intense on her today that her focus just didn't seem to be there. With ball in hand, Monica had an easy table layout to extend her lead to 4. She overshot shape on the 4 ball though, and overcut her shot. Vivian was forced to play safety though and snookered the cue ball behind the 7 & 8 balls. Monica did hit the 4 but left Vivian with a shot and Vivian stepped up to get on the board for the first time in this match. Her position play wasn't ideal but with her shot-making ability in evidence, she pocketed the balls and after sinking the 9 ball, pumped her fist.

Monica had the break advantage going into game 5 and after pocketing a ball, faced several small clusters she would have to navigate if she wanted to run out. She over shot shape on the 3 but made a great back cut into the corner pocket, coming around for shape on the 4 which had settled up against the 5. Thinning the 4, she broke out the 5 to play that into the opposite corner pocket. The only other issue would be coming back up-table for the 6 which was laying on the bottom rail. She did not overshoot her mark this time, successfully put the cue ball where she wanted it for position to the 8 and 9 which were near each other at the foot of the table and she again took a 3 game lead, 4-1.

Vivian broke but failed to make a ball and Monica played a safety. Vivian hit the 1 and almost made the 2 off of it, but the ball hung in the pocket and Monica came back to play another safety. Vivian kicked one long rail and hit the one, leaving Monica a long spot shot cut which she missed. The one came to rest in front of the 9 ball and Vivian chattered "I'm going to go for it and try to play safe too, it's a two-way shot" She missed the 9 but snookered the cue ball behind the 6 and Monica had to use her jump stick. She hit the ball but didn't leave Vivian with much of a shot. Vivian tried a safe but came up dry and Monica pocketed the one to continue through the rack. With a satisfying "thunk", each ball dropped into their respective pockets as the crowd watched her run out to go up 5-1.

Monica went into game 7 with the break advantage but not one ball dropped for her. Vivian stepped up determined but with a wry look on her face due to the fact that she was forced to play safe. Monica's return safety attempt failed and Vivian made the 1, 2 and 3 before overshooting shape on the 4 where she left herself a "50 yard line" shot between the side and corner pockets. She chose the side pocket, and the cue ball came around 2 rails for position on the 5 in the corner and Vivian was able to continue her run out to win game 7 but still facing a 3 game deficit, 2-5. Fortunately she went into the next game with the break advantage hoping to make some magic happen. She finally was able to pocket a ball off of her and began a much needed break and run. With the crowd gasping as one, Vivian lost focus and missed the 4 ball, but didn't leave Monica with an open shot. Monica played safe and Vivian, chiding herself "Get over it, get over it, it's a new shot", stepped up and banked the 4 ball in to redeem herself and proceeded to run out to win the game.

Vivian continued to play like a dog with a bone and managed to get to within one game of Monica, closing the game to 4-5 but Monica played tough and reached the hill first to regain a two game lead 6-5. After Monica broke in game 11, nearly making the 9 ball in the corner but failing to pocket a ball, Vivian made a 2/9 combination and got back to within one game, still down 5-6 but going into game 12 with the break advantage. With someone in the crowd yelling "snap the 9 in!" Vivian re-chalked, double checked the rack and said to Steve Tipton, Tournament Director "No wonder I'm not making anything on the break, the 9 and the 6 aren't touching!" Steve reset the rack carefully to Vivian's approval and Vivian broke the balls, making one and yelling "now that made a difference!" Vivian left herself less than ideal to come off the 4 for the 5 ball, and attempted a two way shot, trying for the 4 and the 9 ball (carom). Neither dropped and Monica stepped up to execute a great cut shot with position for the 5 and had just five balls remaining to reach the finals of the 2008 WPBA National Tour Championships. Pocketing each ball solidly, Monica kept her cool and won the match, 7-5.