

Ya-Yi Yang (TPE)

Photo: Jorge Ferrari



YANG, LIANG LEAD CHINESE TAIPEI'S NEXT GENERATION

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Reem Abulleil

At just 15 years of age, Chinese Taipei's Yang Ya-Yi has been turning heads all week at the Fed Cup by BNP Paribas Asia/Oceania Group I event in Dubai, showcasing a powerful baseline game that got her within one point of victory against India's Rutuja Bhosale on Friday.

Yang led 3-0 in the decider and held three match points before falling to the 23-year-old Bhosale in a final-set tiebreak, 6-3 3-6 7-6(8). She put in a valiant effort over two hours and 44 minutes of play, and gave an objective analysis of her performance after the match.

"I was very nervous. In the final set at 5-4, 40-15, I was very nervous. I lost that game but I wasn't very angry, I just kept fighting," said the big-hitting Yang, who is making her Fed Cup debut this week.

Chinese Taipei's Fed Cup squad in Dubai presents a tale of two generations, as the Chan sisters – Latisha, 30, and Hao-Ching, 26 – are joined by two teenagers, Yang, and the 19-year-old Liang En-Shuo. Doubles world No.1 and singles world No.54 Hsieh Su-Wei, 34, was nominated but did not participate in any matches.

Yang and Liang took over singles duties, and they also featured in doubles alongside Latisha on various occasions.

“It’s my first time in Fed Cup and I’m very happy because yesterday I played against Zheng Saisai [in singles] and Peng Shuai, so many good players, so I’m very excited and I thank Chinese Taipei for giving me the chance to play here,” Yang told FedCup.com.

“I mainly play singles, but yesterday I played doubles with Latisha, she’s my idol, and she taught me a lot of things about the doubles game.”

Judging by her relentless baseline prowess, and her never-say-die attitude, it’s no surprise who Yang’s favourite player is.

“Simona Halep,” she says with a smile. “Because she’s not tall and she’s still very strong and very good.”

She may be only 15, but Yang has already started playing on the professional circuit and is ranked No.852 in the world. She aims to halve her ranking by the end of the year.

While Yang is winless in singles this week, she did claim a doubles victory with Latisha Chan in their opener against Indonesia last Tuesday.

“It’s my first time to watch Yang play and I think she’s been improving every single match and I really enjoyed the doubles we played together, and you can see that she also played so much better than the first time we played together. Today, this fight, I think will help her a lot and I’m very happy to see the young players coming up,” Latisha Chan said on Friday.

Liang, who beat Ankita Raina 3-6 6-2 6-3 to take the tie to a decisive doubles, made her Fed Cup debut last year and looks comfortable in her role as Chinese Taipei’s singles No.1.

“It’s an honour to be on the national team at this age, so I’m just giving my best each match,” said Liang. “I don’t feel any pressure, because I have great team-mates, we just trust each other and keep going every match.”

The 19-year-old, who won the Australian Open girls’ singles and doubles titles in 2018, was ranked as high as No.2 in the world as a junior. She made an impressive transition to the pros and peaked at No.150 in the WTA rankings in May 2019. The Guangzhou-based player hopes to crack the top 100 this year and wants to make the main draw at all four majors.

“Li Na inspired a lot of Asian players to trust themselves and that they can be also as good as her. I think she gave us a lot confidence in ourselves,” said Liang of Asia’s first-ever Grand Slam singles champion and Hall-of-Famer.

Latisha Chan, who played her first Fed Cup 14 years ago, is thrilled to see young talent emerge and fly the flag for Chinese Taipei and is happy to serve as a role model for her teenage team-mates.

“Eventually the young generation will take over. It’s really nice to share the court and to share the team with the young players and to pass our experience and everything, and also to get their young energy,” said the 2017 US Open doubles champion. “I think we

blend in very well and I think that's important. We need to share and to use this power more and then eventually it'll be their world anyway."

She sees a bright future for her nation's Fed Cup team and can't wait to make a return to the competition's top flight.

"I think we've been to that level before and it would be great to go back to that level again. I don't doubt our quality of the game. It might take a little more time but I think eventually we'll get there," she added.

Chinese Taipei's hopes of reaching the Fed Cup Play-offs were ended by India's 2-1 victory, sealed when Raina and Sania Mirza clinched a 6-4 4-6 6-4 win over Chan and Liang. With one round of matches remaining, India lie in second place in the six-team round robin having won three of their four ties.

Runaway leaders China's perfect record came to an end when Peng Shuai and YiFan Xu retired while leading Yasmina Karimjanova and Setora Normurodova 5-2, handing Uzbekistan their first match win of the week in a 2-1 defeat.

Korea, Rep. defeated Indonesia 2-1 and head into the final day's showdown with China knowing only victory will be enough to give them a chance of claiming a top-two finish. India face Indonesia, who also need to win to have any hope of advancing to April's Play-offs, while Chinese Taipei must beat Uzbekistan to have any hope of fending off relegation.

TIE DETAILS

GROUP I, ASIA/OCEANIA, GROUP A, ROUND ROBIN -

CHINESE TAIPEI **1 : 2** **INDIA**

Dubai Duty Free Tennis Stadium, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
06 Mar - 06 Mar 2020

Su-Wei HSIEH	Ankita RAINA
En Shuo LIANG	Riya BHATIA
Ya Yi YANG	Rutuja BHOSALE
Latisha CHAN	Sowjanya BAVISETTI
Hao-Ching CHAN	Sania MIRZA

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