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2010 College Table Tennis National Championships

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WEBSITE: <http://www.nctta.org/champs/2010>

****NEWS RELEASE****

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Improved Women's Singles Field Challenges Defending Champion

Judy Hugh, defending women's singles champion may have entered the 2010 College Table Tennis National Championships as the No. 4 seed, but she still had no easy path just to make it back to the finals.

Hugh, a junior at Rutgers University, is playing the underdog role as this year's Championships have seen a considerable increase in playing level over last year. Generally underdog and defending champion aren't used in the same sentence but that is not the case in the 2010 Women's Singles event. Columbia-standout Stephanie Shih exclaims, "The level of talent this year is ridiculous!"

Ridiculously good perhaps when compared to the 2009 Championships where defending champion didn't face a match point against her until the actual finals. This year, however, Hugh had to fight and scrape through some hard difficult matches early on; some she wasn't even expected to win. Joe Wells, NCTTA Vice President observes, "The women's game goes up about every year and the ladies competing face a tough road."

In the semifinals, Hugh faced second-seeded Livia Mizobuchi, the top player from Lindenwood's roster, ranked a full 100 points above her. Judy Hugh persevered in the fashion that makes her one of the fan favorites every year, with passionate tenacity and lightening fast returns. The match went the distance, but Hugh pulled it out in the seventh game, with scores of -8, 4, 6, -7, 2, -8, and 8.

The finals of the women's singles championship featured a similar match up to last year's final in which Rutgers' Judy Hugh matched up against the top player from Texas Wesleyan. Last year it was veteran Jasna Reed in the finals, this year the rookie Sara Hazinski, who clearly is no slouch, having entered the Championships as the No. 1 seed. Hazinski also captured the mixed doubles title earlier in the Championships with husband Mark Hazinski.

Texas Wesleyan Coach, Keith Evans opines, "We have been here before, we hope to do well." Even though Evans gives little indication their out for revenge, it's still clear they'd like to bring the women's singles title back to Fort Worth, Texas after losing it to Hugh in 2009.

Santos Shih, Columbia coach, offers some advice for Judy. "It will be a close match, but she needs to cover her forehand better than her opponent. Whoever covers or protects their forehand side will win."

Shih is well aware that both opponents have sizzling quick returns on their backhand side. Sara Hazinski shows the standing room-only crowd at the College Table Tennis Championships a thing or two about sizzling backhands. The first game goes to deuce, falling to Hugh at 10. But then it's all Hazinski in the next two games 11-7, 11-1.

In game 4, Hugh realizes it's now or never, and jumps out to a 6-1 lead, but Hazinski storms back, winning 7 of the next 9 points to take a 9-8 lead. After a timeout at 9-all, Hazinski went on to take the fourth game at deuce, then cruised in the 5th to win her first ever women's singles title. Final scores: -10, 7, 1, 11, 8

Regarding the pivotal fourth game, Hazinski thinks it better not to be too mindful of the scoreboard when way behind and just take things one point at a time. "I did not realize I was down 6-1. My coach Jasna was very helpful during the game. She played Judy last year in the finals and told me what Judy might do when it was 9-9 during the timeout."

About NCTTA

The National Collegiate Table Tennis Association (NCTTA) is a non-profit organization established exclusively for promoting the sport of table tennis at the college level. As the national governing body for college table tennis in the United States and Canada, NCTTA organizes intercollegiate competition throughout North America. www.nctta.org

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