



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times
SECOND UCT CROWN...Blue Devil sophomore Tara Criscuolo, who won at third singles last year, won the UCT second singles crown.



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ON HER WAY TO THE TITLE...Blue Devil junior Amanda Simmons, pictured, and Debbie Wu won the UCT second doubles title.



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WAITING TO STRIKE THE BALL...Blue Devil freshman Debbie Wu teamed with Amanda Simmons to win the UCT second doubles title.

Blue Devil Net Girls Capture Third Straight Union County Tournament Tennis Crown

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each other. We never let put each other down. I was excited to play first doubles and to win counties," commented Melissa who added, "I like hitting in the sharp corners and my volleys are pretty good. I like serves too, a little bit of everything."

Throughout the title match Kim would constantly walk over to Melissa and converse in private.

"I said 'good job! Relax!' Things to relax each other pretty much," she said.

"Kim is pretty unbelievable. I think, in her four years, she only lost one match in doubles. We play a pretty heavy schedule. That's tough tennis. To only lose once in four years speaks volumes of her. She's a mentally tough player and playing with her sister strengthens them both," said Blue Devil Head Coach Ed Tirone.

Blue Devil sophomore Tara Criscuolo, last year's UCT champ at third singles and seeded first at second

singles, blanked Plainfield's (P) Victoria Henry, then downed Oak Knoll's (OK) Lindsay Boyajian, 6-0, 6-2, to advance to the semis where she stopped GL's Paige Geiger, 6-2, 6-0. Criscuolo then grabbed her second UCT title in as many years by defeating Liz Lautenbach (RP), 6-1, 6-2.

"My opponent was really great player. It wasn't easy for sure. I had to work really hard to get it. She deserves all the credit. It was fun to play but intense at times," said Criscuolo. "I'm best when I go for shots. I had to push sometimes to get it (the ball) back. I took advantage when it was short and tried to go for the winner."

The wind picked up significantly during the championship and it did have some effect.

"Wind is one of my least favorite aspects outside and I have to change my game," said Criscuolo.

Receiving the top seed at second doubles, Blue Devils Debbie Wu and

Amanda Simmons blanked their first-round opponents then cruised past ALJ's Giovanna Casazza and Kaitlyn Perez, 6-0, 6-1. In the semis, the pair slipped past SPF Raiders Courtney Bifani and Allyson Lisenberg, 6-4, 6-4. Playing in a very animated fashion, Wu and Simmons seized the title with a 7-5, 6-1 victory over KP's Courtney and Alex Alpaugh.

"I think we played really well. We were both a little nervous before but that certainly was some of the best tennis that I've played. I think it was the best Debbie played," said Simmons, a junior. "We support each other on the court. That's why I like doubles. It helps having someone cheering you on."

"Amanda and I were really cooperative. I felt we accomplished something very big," said Wu, a freshman who feels that her strength is backcourt play.

Earlier, Raiders Bifani and Lisenberg won 6-2, 6-0, over Rebecca Jobe and Laura Ehnes (RP) then topped Zabeb Awalom and Gery Kunnath (U), 6-2, 4-6, 6-2. Facing Summit's (S) Julie Avery and Rebecca Bar for third place, the pair took three sets but won, 4-6, 6-4, 7-3 (tiebreaker).

Blue Devil freshman Sam Borr blanked New Providence's (NP) Pricilla Barletta then was nipped, 6-4, 7-6 (3) by second-seeded Felice Trinh of Linden (L) in the first singles quarterfinals. Borr defeated Rebecca Vera (RP), 6-2, 6-3, then topped Raider Alex Szczuka, 6-3, 6-1, for fifth place. Earlier Szczuka defeated Summit's (S) Lauren Leland, 6-1, 6-4, to face top-seeded Allie Tierney (GL) who handed her a 6-0, 6-2, defeat. Before facing Borr, Szczuka topped Cranford's Chrissy Oltman, 3-6, 6-0, 6-0.

At second singles, Raider Kathleen

Yan defeated Ellen Salmi of Roselle Catholic (RC), 6-1, 6-0, then had a battle with Kent Place's (KP) Allison Oberlander, a Westfield resident, falling, 6-2, 6-1. Oberlander, who previously topped Union's (U) Lanel

Gramatica, 6-0, 6-1, lost 6-2, 6-4, to Lautenbach in the semi then she was defeated, 6-2, 6-4, by GL's Paige Geiger for third place.

Blue Devil Amy Weiss won 6-1, 6-0, over Union Catholic's Colleen

Cassidy at third singles then defeated GL's Sophie Osborne, 6-0, 6-3, in the quarters. After being stopped by KP's Erin McDonnell in the semis, Weiss defeated Arshiya Fazal (NP), 6-1, 6-4, to capture third place. Raider Sahrula Kubie breezed by Stephanie Ramirez (P), 6-0, 6-0, then dropped a 6-4, 6-2, decision to Fazal (NP) in the quarters.

Raiders Isabel Lopez and Neha Pannuri won their opening round over Giola Topazio and Tian Mauer (OK) but they were stopped by KP's Kusnierz and Lindecke in the quarters.

Aware that Kent Place may have been the favored to win the UCT, coach Tirone said, "We played them in the finals two matches. Anytime we beat them that made the difference. The difference in the two doubles was a total of eight points. That pretty much sealed it for us."

TEAM TOTALS:

1. Westfield 77, 2. Kent Place 68, 3. Governor Livingston 38, 4. Summit 37, 5. Roselle Park 36, 6. Oak Knoll 24, 7. Scotch Plains-Fanwood, Linden 20, 9. New Providence 19, 10. Union 5, 11. Johnson 4

CHAMPIONSHIPS:

First singles: Felice Trinh (L) d. Allie Tierney (GL), 3-6, 6-3, 6-1
Second singles: Tara Criscuolo (W) d. Liz Lautenbach (RP), 6-1, 6-2
Third singles: Erin McDonnell (KP) d. Mara Bergman (S), 6-2, 6-2
First doubles: Kim Morawski and Melissa Morawski (W) d. Amanda Kusnierz and Nellie Lindecke (KP), 6-3, 6-2
Second doubles: Debbie Wu and Amanda Simmons (W) d. Courtney Alpaugh and Alex Alpaugh (KP), 7-5, 6-1

THIRD PLACE (LOCAL AREA):

Second singles: Paige Geiger (GL) d. Allison Oberlander (KP), 6-2, 6-4
Third singles: Amy Weiss (W) d. Arshiya Fazal (NP), 6-1, 6-4
Second doubles: Courtney Bifani/Allyson Lisenberg (SPF) d. Julie Avery/Rebecca Bar (S), 4-6, 6-4, tiebreaker (7-3)



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FOURTH UCT CROWN...Blue Devil Kim Morawski, left, is all smiles after winning her fourth UCT crown. Melissa, a freshman, won her first UCT title.



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THIRD AT SECOND DOUBLES...Raiders Courtney Bifani, top, and Allyson Lisenberg, bottom, placed third at second doubles.



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