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# Georgia Southern University Athletics



**SUN BELT CHAMPIONS!** Women's Tennis Outlasts South Alabama, 4-3, For First Sun Belt Title

Eagles also earn a first NCAA Championships bid with the win over the Jaguars

Women's Tennis

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**PEACHTREE CITY, Ga.** - East second seed Georgia Southern overcame a 3-1 deficit, winning a pair of third-set matches to win the 2021 Sun Belt Conference Tournament Championship with a 4-3 victory over East top seed South Alabama on Sunday afternoon at the Peachtree Tennis Center.

The Eagles run their win streak to 11 straight and claim their first Sun Belt tournament title, as well as their first NCAA Championships berth after earning the league's automatic qualifier. Georgia Southern moves to 19-8 on the campaign, extending its school-record single-season win total. The Eagles also avenged a 4-1 loss to South Alabama in the 2019 Sun Belt Tournament Championship match. South Alabama falls to 15-6 on the year with the loss.

Georgia Southern claimed the doubles point to take an early 1-0 lead. [Sonja Keranen](#) and [Elizabeth Goines](#) picked up a 6-3 win at No. 3 doubles, then [Charlotte van Diemen](#) and [Sophie Wagemaker](#) rallied from a 5-4 deficit to win 7-5 at No. 1 doubles over Cami Moreno and Yurie Takanishi.

"The doubles proved to be giant," Georgia Southern Head Coach [Sean McCaffrey](#) said. "I think we struggled so much of our season in being able to get that point. We were always in every match, but it would just come down to something that didn't go our way. So we just had to tighten things up, and improve our discipline when it comes to being a little more efficient with how we play. I sensed a momentum shift when we got it to 5-5 at No. 1 doubles. We drew on that, and I was really happy for Lot [[Charlotte van Diemen](#)] and Sophie to get that match."

South Alabama seemingly took control of the match early in singles, winning five of six first sets. Yu Fujioka avenged an earlier-season loss at No. 1 singles to the Eagles' [Nadia Meier](#) with a 6-4, 6-3 win to tie the match at 1-all. Moreno then downed [Sophie Wagemaker](#), 6-1, 6-4, at No. 3 singles to put the Jaguars in front. Otoh Aoki's 6-3, 6-3 win at No. 5 singles made the score 3-1, when the Eagles' [Mila Hartig](#) collected a 6-2, 7-5 win at No. 4 singles to close the gap to 3-2.

"I just kept on walking around and saying - be relentless," Coach McCaffrey said about South Alabama claiming the first set in five of the six singles matches. "Just because we're down now, it's a three-set match. So just find a way to dig down deep. I could feel Mila was going to get her match. I wanted Liz [[Elizabeth Goines](#)] to just get some footing after a fast first set. I figured she could just find a way to keep it close, and push it to a third set, anything could happen. And she did a good job of that."

After dropping their first sets, [Paula Boixader](#) and [Elizabeth Goines](#) each rallied to win their second sets at No. 2 and No. 6 singles, respectively, and send their singles matches to deciding third sets. Boixader finished off a 6-3 third-set win to tie the score at 3-all, then Goines won 6-2 in the third set over Diana Monsalve, closing out the match by winning 13 of her last 15 points in the set.

"With Paula, I knew we needed some sort of momentum shift," Coach McCaffrey said. "I told her at 3-2 in the second set that any time you get a ball in the middle of the court, extend the court and go big off the forehand. And if you win two or three points in a row, go crazy, cheering. It really turned her game on and was a big difference maker. If she doesn't win, Liz doesn't get a chance to clinch. Lena [Lutzeier] and I told Liz at the beginning of the year that she was going to clinch the conference championship for us in Atlanta. And she did it."

"It's so good to see the team experience this, with so many fans and former players from both the men's and women's teams at Georgia Southern," Coach McCaffrey said about the Championship. "It was great to share that experience with them. This was really special. We started this, almost from scratch. In just four seasons, the women have done an amazing job. I'm proud of the team, and proud to be a part of Georgia Southern. This was their main goal at the beginning of the season, and they accomplished it. If things get in your way, you just have to stay true to the philosophy and the process, and amazing things can happen. Our women showed that today."

The NCAA Division I Women's Tennis Spring Selection Show will be on Monday, May 3, at 6 p.m. on NCAA.com. The Eagles will be in action in NCAA Championships play on May 7-8 at a site to be determined.



## RESULTS

### *Singles*

Yu Fujioka (USA) def. [Nadja Meier](#) (GS) 6-4, 6-3  
[Paula Boixader](#) (GS) def. Liz Cheleno (USA) 6-7 (9), 6-4, 6-3  
 Cami Moreno (USA) def. [Sophie Wagemaker](#) (GS) 6-1, 6-4  
[Mila Hartig](#) (GS) def. Milka Pasanen (USA) 6-2, 7-5  
 Otoha Aoki (USA) def. [Paula Hijos](#) (GS) 6-3, 6-3  
[Elizabeth Goines](#) (GS) def. Diana Monsalve (USA) 1-6, 6-4, 6-2

### *Doubles*

[Charlotte van Diemen](#)/[Sophie Wagemaker](#) (GS) def. Cami Moreno/Yurie Takanishi (USA) 7-5  
 Nikola Kohoutova/Yu Fujioka (USA) def. [Paula Boixader](#)/[Nadja Meier](#) (GS) 6-1  
[Elizabeth Goines](#)/[Sonja Keranen](#) (GS) def. Otoha Aoki/Aina Domingo-Bernabeu (USA) 6-3

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