

SERENA WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR FED CUP

Charles Bricker Staff Writer.

South Florida Sun - Sentinel

Apr 15, 2005. pg. 7.C

(Copyright 2005 by the Sun-Sentinel)

Serena Williams' ankle, sprained last week at Amelia Island, is fine, and she will play Fed Cup against Belgium, April 23-24, at the Delray Beach Tennis Center. But this was hardly a crisis for captain Zina Garrison.

"I didn't spazz out about it because I knew Serena would have called me if it was something major," Garrison said Thursday in a telephone interview.

There was another reason she could not have been overly concerned.

Her other Fed Cup singles players, Lindsay Davenport and Venus Williams, have an aggregate seven Grand Slam titles and they're pitted against four players, none of whom are ranked higher than 173.

Garrison could have sent third-line American players Amy Frazier and Meghann Shaughnessy out to play this quarterfinal tie and come away with a 5-0 victory.

Instead, she'll have three top-10 players (Davenport is No. 1, Serena is No. 4 and Venus is No. 8) to compete against No. 173 Kirsten Flipkens, No. 174 Els Callens, No. 364 Leslie Butkiewicz and No. 392 Eveline Vanhyfte.

The biggest challenge will be getting people to watch this mismatch.

The USTA will cover the upper deck of the stadium and part of the lower deck to scale seating down to 3,800, and they've reported selling more than 80 percent of the tickets.

But how competitive will this tie be?

Flipkens, 19, is a bonafide prospect, having won the U.S. Open and Wimbledon juniors, but hasn't played a match since going down with a back injury in October.

Callens, 34, is an effective doubles player, but she's only 3-7 in singles matches this year, including qualifying. Butkiewicz and Vanhyfte are so far off the radar officials at the WTA office in St. Petersburg weren't familiar with the names.

The matches begin at 1:30 p.m. both days and will be televised live on ESPN Classic. Tickets can be purchased by calling 561-966- 3309 or on www.ticketmaster.com.