

DOHA 2025: A CHAMPION FINDS HER WAY BACK



Now that the 2026 season has started and a new calendar is in front of us, it's easier to look back and see how 2025 really unfolded. The first big stage was, of course, the Australian Open. But for the women's tour, the first WTA 1000 that showed us where the year was heading came in Doha. Played in early February, just after Melbourne, it arrived at that moment when players were trying to find early season form. The stands were full, and for one week in Qatar you could already feel the direction of the year.

The singles trophy went to a familiar name but this time it felt different. Amanda Anisimova arrived in Doha outside the top 40, unseeded, and still finding her rhythm again after time away from the sport. A week later, she was lifting the biggest title of her career. In the final, she beats Jelena Ostapenko with the score line 6–4 6–3. It was Anisimova's first WTA 1000 title, the third singles trophy of her career, and the run carried her into the top 20 for the first time.

Her path to the title showed how much work she has put into this comeback. Along the way she beats seeded players and well-known names like Paula Badosa in straight sets, then Leylah Fernandez, Marta Kostyuk, and Ekaterina Alexandrova. None of it came easy, but she kept playing solid tennis, match after match. For someone who had slipped down the rankings and even stepped away from the tour to focus on her mental health, Doha was more than a trophy. It felt like a proper fresh start.

Ostapenko was on the other side of the net, and she had made her own statement a day earlier. In the semifinals she stopped three time defending champion Iga Swiatek with a 6–3 6–1 win, ending Swiatek's long unbeaten run at this tournament and stretching their head to head to 5–0. For once in Doha, Swiatek was not the one holding the trophy at the end.

From an Asian point of view in singles, Doha was a week of hard matches and tough draws rather than deep runs. Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen came in as one of the top seeds, but after a first round bye she met Ons Jabeur in her first match and lost 6–4 6–2. For Zheng, it was an early reminder that even with a big ranking and high expectations, nothing is simple at this level.

Two other Asian players also felt how strong the field was. China's Yue Yuan pushed Caroline Garcia before losing in the first round. Japan's Aoi Ito ran into Ostapenko and went out 6–2 6–1.

In doubles, though, Asia was right at the centre of the story. Jiang Xinyu from China and Wu Fang-Hsien from Chinese Taipei reached the final and came within a few points of the title. Their week in Doha was full of tight matches and brave tennis. They beat strong teams round after round, including a win over Hsieh Suwei and Jelena Ostapenko, and arrived in the championship match full of belief.



The final against Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini turned into one of the best doubles matches of the tournament. Jiang and Wu had their chances but lost 7–5 7–6 (10) with the second set tie-break ending 12–10. It was a painful scoreline, but also a sign of how close they already are to the very top of women's doubles. For Wu, it was her first WTA 1000 final. For both of them, it was another step in a season where they kept chasing big titles and kept their names near the top of the rankings.

Other Asian players made their presence felt in doubles too. Hao Ching Chan of Chinese Taipei, partnering Veronika Kudermetova, reached the quarterfinals before having to give Jiang and Wu a walkover. Kazakhstan's Anna Danilina, playing with Irina Khromacheva, also made the last eight. They edged past Japan's Shuko Aoyama and Eri Hozumi in a tight match to get there. Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini went on to win the title, but plenty of the important doubles moments in Doha had Asian names involved, sometimes on both sides of the net.

Now, at the end of the year, Doha looks a little different than it did in February. We know that Anisimova went on to reach Grand Slam finals and climb into the top 5. We know that Zheng's season had big highs on clay before an elbow injury stopped her late in the year. We know that Elena Rybakina later won the WTA Finals, and that Jiang and Wu kept putting together strong doubles results across the calendar. But if you go back to that first WTA 1000 week in Doha, the signs were already there. Anisimova's game was sharp enough to trouble anyone. Zheng arrived as a top seed, even if her stay was short. Asian doubles teams were right in the middle of the title fight. For a tournament at the very start of a long year, Qatar 2025 felt like the first clear sign of what this season might become.