

August 12, 2010



A. AMANMURADOVA/J. Jankovic

7-6, 6-4

An interview with:

AKGUL AMANMURADOVA

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. First, congratulations on your win. How did you feel going from qualifiers to beating the defending champion?

AKGUL AMANMURADOVA: Thank you for congratulations. Yeah, well, I didn't expect before the tournament that I will go that far in the tournament. I knew Cincinnati is very strong event now since it's premier event for second year.

Last year I end up losing first round, so I was just hoping to pass the qualify and see what's gonna happen. I'm already in the quarterfinal, which is great. I have another match coming up tomorrow.

Today I think I had my, I would say, one of the best wins in my career because I've never beaten anyone top 10, and she's No. 2 right now and she has a lot of titles. She's incredible player.

Of course I'm very happy with that win and with the way I played today.

Q. How did you feel about playing Ivanovic in the next round?

AKGUL AMANMURADOVA: Well, I played Ana two years ago, and that time I lost against her in two sets. That was on clay. I've seen her playing yesterday and today a little bit on TV. She's in a great shape I think right now. It's gonna be tough, tough match, as it always is.

I'll just try to play my best tennis and see what I can do.

Q. Talk about your ability to serve. There was only, what, one break in that whole set.

AKGUL AMANMURADOVA: Yeah, well here, the balls they're using at this tournament, these Penn balls, they fly, let's say like this. They are light. It's very difficult to control the return. So if you serve well and if you keep the percentage of the first serve in, it's very tough to return.

Well, serve is one of my strongest points, so I don't see any other reason why we didn't break each other that often. I think today I served a lot of aces also, which helped me to save energy. Because to play against Jelena always at the baseline is very difficult. She is moving very well, and she's able to get to every ball. If you play rally every point, I think I would be tired in the first set already.

Because I serve well and because I pull a lot of aces, that help me to save energy.

Q. You had 12 aces and no double faults. Can you recall ever being that effective with your serve?

AKGUL AMANMURADOVA: Yeah, I think that's one of the best matches serve-wise, yeah, because usually when I take that much risk I double fault. But that's how it is. You take risk, and you want to put as hard as you can second serve. That's what happened to me in Wimbledon against, Kuznetsova. I served 16 aces and I end up losing the match. But I took that risk, so on grass it was no other way for me to play against her.

So today I think I improved on that. I didn't serve double fault. Of course the last game was very difficult. First two points I serve second serve, and it was kind of under pressure because I was serving for the match. I felt that it's very close. It was not easy, last game.

Q. Someone watching this match seeing you beating the No. 2 player in the world never would guess that you're ranked outside of top 100. You were inside the top 100 for a long time, and recently fell outside of it. What do you think has been keeping you from being ranked higher?

AKGUL AMANMURADOVA: Well, I think there are few reasons for that. First, maybe at the beginning I start pretty late on the tour compared to the girls now. So I was not very good in the juniors at all, so maybe I didn't have that believe enough in myself, and I start to believe not long ago that I actually can do it and beat top player.

And falling out of top 100, that's another thing. Because sometimes you have your game, you have everything in your hands, but something stops you, like an injury or just maybe, I don't know, tough draw. I played Kuznetsova in Wimbledon. I mean, she was in good shape, and I played three sets and I lost. I lost the points and I dropped.

Because the ranking now, it's very tough, and you have to play every week and you have to play very good. Because this new Roadmap, it's designed to get the best tennis, the best players always at the tournament. So sometimes it's just a lot of things come not well at the same moment and you drop.

Also, I was not playing well in the beginning of the year. I think that was a question of the preparation season. Maybe I did something wrong there. So I wasn't ready to play in Australia. First three weeks I lost first round.

So, you know, that's also the reason I didn't defend. And then you have the pressure that you have to defend your points, and you have to also move -- you want to move forward. There's a lot of things. I can't say you that there is one reason why I was not there and why I drop off top 100.

Q. Speaking of points, you now made it to the quarterfinals of a premier event. It's gonna help your ranking a lot, and will help it for a long time. You'll probably get in now, just with these points, to the first three slams of next year probably.

AKGUL AMANMURADOVA: Yeah, but I still have -- from last year I have final to defend in my home city.

Q. Tashkent?

AKGUL AMANMURADOVA: Yes. Also, I always want to do well there because it's my home city and a lot of people come to watch me. All of people from the federation, the sport committee, my friends, my family. For me, I would say it's another Grand Slam. It's a fifth Grand Slam definitely.

So I'm still hoping I can do to this year and I can play well there.

Q. Both of you played 19 straight games before you won three straight there. You guys were flip-flopping for 19 straight games. What were you able to do to stay cool in that situation from the heat? And then also, what were you able to do kind of just to stay focused?

AKGUL AMANMURADOVA: Well, I was trying to watch that I drink enough, because as you see, I'm tall, I'm big, and I sometimes have cramping problem. I saw that today it's very hot during the warm-up, and I was drinking before the match, during the match, eating bananas and all that. That's just hydration-wise.

But also during the match I was thinking -- I always have to keep in my mind that I have to hold my serve. It's for sure there is a chance that she's not gonna serve that well always. I've watched her play, and she's much better returner, I would say, than server. So I knew that I have to hold my serve, and then try to play aggressive on the return.

So that was the plan.

Q. There was only one break in today's match. Sometimes WTA matches can get criticized for there being too many breaks compared to the ATP. Do you think that you're sort of unique in the sense that you don't get broken that much compared to a lot girls on tour? Do you think that your matches take on a different tone than other WTA matches?

AKGUL AMANMURADOVA: Maybe, but I think now it's also that there are players like Maria Sharapova, Venus Williams who are big servers and they are able to hold. Serena. So I'm not the one that's very unique.

I think they have better -- they still can count on their return, because they're much more complete players than me. I put everything on the serve side. Maybe that's why I take more risk. I'm also a little bit taller than they are. (Laughing.) Maybe that's why I don't get broken that...

This week I was really serving well. Still, the match before, first two games I get broke, and just because the percentage of the first serve was not there. And the girl, she was playing very consistent, and she broke me two times. After I was able to break back.

But it still happens in women's tennis, because now a lot of girls, they are quite fast and they like to use the power on the serve. So sometimes it's maybe better to serve kick and wide than straight to the body and hard. Because that's where they use the power, they go into the ball, and after you are in trouble, after your big serve.

So that's maybe why that is the reason why people get broken quite often.

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