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An interview with:

JAMES BLAKE

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You didn't look like you felt well on the court today. Were you feeling ill?

JAMES BLAKE: No. Just didn't feel like my kind of game out there today. I didn't have -- didn't have my best, or even close to my best.

I haven't felt prepared for a tournament for a long time thanks to a lot of injuries. Felt like things have been getting better, and then you get setback after setback and it takes its toll.

Just showed it today.

Q. Do you feel like you're opponent did anything better or special, or it just wasn't your day today?

JAMES BLAKE: Yeah, he played well. I mean, can't take anything away from him. He beat me. He served very well. He came up with shots when he needed to. I didn't put him in too many pressure situations, so it wasn't a matter of him feeling pressure at all.

When he can swing that freely, anyone at this level with the talent he has is gonna but put that kind of a beat-down on me.

So credit to him. He did that.

Q. Did you have any lingering injuries that bothered you today at all?

JAMES BLAKE: Plenty. Too many to talk about.

Q. Will you be playing in next week's tournament?

JAMES BLAKE: Plan on it. It seems like they keep coming up quickly, because I know what would be best for me is to have a real rest and get my body healthy.

But I really want to play New Haven and I really want to play at the US Open, so I know we're gonna be kind of playing beat the clock and see if I can be as healthy as possible going in there.

If I'm at the point where I'm at today and not feeling any better than I did today, then I don't know if I'll be able to. But I really think with a couple days off I'll be able to be a lot better. The hometown crowds there will hopefully lift my spirits a lot, and I'll have a whole a lot to play for.

So I'm definitely looking forward to that, you know, as soon as I can put this match out of my head.

Q. What kind of preparation will you do for the upcoming tournament?

JAMES BLAKE: First, rest. That's the first thing I know I need. It's a tough situation because I want to work hard. That's my mentality always, is putting in more work than my opponent. I've been trying to do that since I felt like I was starting to get healthier. And then I do that, and I guess I maybe push it too hard and injury something else.

That's just -- so now maybe I need to listen to my body and take a little bit of a break, couple days off, and see if that'll help me. I mean, I'm kind of, I guess, playing trial and error, and it's not working out so well so far.

Q. Do you feel like the change in coaching made any difference in your game at all, either negative or positive?

JAMES BLAKE: You know, I feel like it's been sort of unfair to Kelly because he hasn't gotten to coach the player he sort of signed you up to coach. I haven't been the same in over a year thanks to a lot injuries. I haven't been healthy fr even close to three or four months straight when he's been my coach.

When he started I was dealing with knee issues, and they've been lingering for a long time,

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and then a lot of other things have come up. I feel sort of bad for him, because he wants to work on a lot of things and I want to work on a lot of things. If we put the pedal to the metal and work too hard, then something else gets injured. It's been more frustrating just kind of fighting my body. I need to figure out a way to keep that healthy, and then we'll really have an opportunity to see how much work we can do together and make some progress.

But I definitely feel like he's a great coach. He's gonna help me. He will help me with the actual tennis part. It's just a matter of being able to execute it and be healthy and out on the practice court enough.

Q. When was the last time you would say you felt somewhere close to 100% physically?

JAMES BLAKE: Yeah, I'm still thinking. It's been a long time. I would say 2008. It's been a while.

Q. So for two years there's always been something niggling somewhere in your body?

JAMES BLAKE: Well, for the last year, year and a half, up until Miami of this year Miami it was my knee. That was the problem. Just never getting better, being a nagging thing, nagging, and just playing at on 90%, 85%, 90%, it's generally not enough to compete at the top level.

I was still getting by because my ranking was high enough, and I was able to win a few matches just kind of scrapping 'em out. But I definitely didn't feel 100%.

And then this year the knee was a problem. It got better, then my shoulder, my hamstring, too many other things have popped up. It's not fun.

Q. Are you giving yourself any kind of timeline as far as if the injuries keep going on and the play doesn't get up to the level, any expectations or anything like that?

JAMES BLAKE: No, I've never really set any expectations. As long as I don't have any regrets when I'm done. There's kind of two ways to look at it here: I could keep trying the same thing I've been trying, but I'm gonna maybe need some rest after the Open, more than just a day here and there.

So I think what I'll most likely do is reassess and take some time after the Open and

hopefully come back healthier, better, and with the ability to put in a lot of time on the practice court with Kelly and get ready for maybe the indoors in the fall.

Then see if that works. If that doesn't work, I'll start thinking of other options. I don't know how many more are left after that other than the rest and recovery. But if it doesn't get back, you know, I knew at some point my body was gonna give out probably. I hope it's not this year; I hope it's not next year; I hope it's not for a few years. But right now it's testing my patience.

Q. Do you still believe in yourself?

JAMES BLAKE: Absolutely. I believe that I can still play the way I used to. I believe I can still hopefully improve. I know I can improve from today, that's for sure.

It's tough to go in and have the same confidence you used to have every single match when you haven't prepared the way you used to. And I haven't been able to prepare -- last week I thought was gonna be my first week where I was gonna be able to prepare and work, and some other little injuries popped up. That's getting frustrating.

If I can get back to feeling like I can prepare that way, then, yeah, I believe I can be back with the top players. But it's gonna take some rest, and then it's gonna take maybe some luck in staying healthy for a while.

Q. In addition to putting in the practice time after the Open, there are obviously some 1000 tournaments overseas after the US Open. Would you consider playing some doubles with a good partner?

JAMES BLAKE: No. I'm not going to Asia just to play doubles. Like I said, I'm gonna need rest. That's not rest. As much as it might seem like doubles is easy, it's still taxing on the body. I'm not gonna put myself through that.

Because that's sort of my been my problem, I think. Now I'm 20/20 hindsight, but all the times I've tried to rest in the past I've still been doing other stuff. I've still been lifting weights, I've still been doing core work in the pool, and whatever else needs to be done as much as I possibly can do.

Maybe my body is telling me that there is a time for a real break. I haven't had an actual vacation in probably five, six years. So maybe it's

time to take a little break and take a step back and put the racquets down. I hear about a lot other guys after the season really putting the racquets down for a while, and I've never been the type that can do that. I want to get back out on the court.

You know what, maybe after the Open it's time to put 'em down for a couple weeks and see where my head's at and body's at after that.

Q. A couple weeks rather than a month or two?

JAMES BLAKE: We'll see. (Smiling.) I mean, you probably caught me at my -- what's gotten me successful and what's probably hurting me right now is it should be a month, and instead I want to make a couple weeks because I want to get back out there as quickly as possible.

But it should be a little longer probably. Like I said, we'll see how I feel at that point. If I'm getting stir crazy and want to get back out on the court or if I can -- my coach might need to hide my racquets and keep me off the court for a little while if it comes to that.

Q. Did you ever get an apology from Pam Shriver or anyone else?

JAMES BLAKE: I got a very nice e-mail, yes.

Q. From her?

JAMES BLAKE: From her.

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