

August 11, 2010



K. CLIJSTERS/D. Safina

7-5, 6-2

An interview with:

KIM CLIJSTERS

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Congratulations on your win tonight.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Thanks.

Q. You lost to her last year, similar scoreline. Talk about what was different from tonight and how your game has changed and maybe also how her game has changed over the last year.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Obviously the biggest difference was not having played any of the players at the time, so kind of new. Going back on last year's match, kind of what I was expecting from her side of the court, obviously last year she was playing, you know, also a lot better than she is in the recent months.

I think her game as well, it's just -- I think last year she didn't miss much and was serving incredibly well. Just really heavy groundstrokes and just stepping in whenever she had a short ball and just going for the winners.

I think obviously now she's had some injuries and everything, and I think she's just looking for those few matches in a row that she can win and get that confidence back.

So I knew that if I could hang in there, even when they 5-All and just don't give her those easy mistakes. Even though I want playing my best tennis at all, but, you know, in the critical situations you have to try not to give your opponent like any easy mistakes.

At the end, I forced her to go for a little bit more and she made some mistakes when her best shot, which is her backhand. And that's also a good feeling to have, knowing that she's trying to do more with her backhand and it's not going the way that she wants it to.

Q. You said you weren't playing your best tennis. What do you think you could have done better?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Just everything in general. Obviously my first match since Wimbledon, so that's probably going to be my biggest focus. Since, you know, I've come back, I think my consistency is something that used to be my strength probably in the past, in my first career.

Obviously because I don't play the same amount of matches that I did then, that's something that I have to adjust to. I have to learn to deal with it in a different way. That's not always that easy.

But I try, and I try different ways to get through matches, to rely on different things now that I'm a little bit older and have the experience. I think that's helped me a few times, but not every time.

So it's a challenge out there every time you step out there.

Q. Talk a little bit about your return game. It seemed very strong tonight. You were able to break five out of eight opportunities that you had. Seemed like you were in control almost the whole match.

KIM CLIJSTERS: That is the thing with her serve. She has a very good serve, but she kind of plays or I think prefers to play that heavier kick serve a lot of the times. You can either do two things: You can step back and let it bounce up and kind of take it over your shoulder where you kind of only have one chance, and that's just to hit it back higher and deeper with more spin; or you can stay on top of your baseline and take it on the rise.

That's kind of what I tried to do probably the most today. I tried to obviously a lot of times

kind of mix it up a little bit and give her not the same kind of rhythm from the return. But, um, I tried to do that. Obviously that's something I didn't do really last year, was the returning.

So I really just tried to focus on making those returns, because she's a tall girl and she's, fit but she's not the best mover out there. I thought if I could get that first or second shot going, you know, towards the lines a little bit more and make her move, then I felt very comfortable during the rallies.

Q. 21 unforced errors. Is that really too many for a two-set match?

KIM CLIJSTERS: It is. It's too many. But like I said before, yeah, I have those challenges with the inconsistency that I really need to focus on. Again, night matches, and I enjoy playing them, but you have to just get used to the different view, you know, just everything. You have to get a feel for it.

In the beginning returning I felt like I was late a couple times and making a little bit more easier mistakes that I usually probably don't make. Like I said, hopefully my next match there will be a few less than 21.

Q. Do you think the unforced errors is being overly aggressive possibly, or was the strategy for instance wanting to make short points?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah, I think these days in women's tennis you will see unforced errors a little bit more, because we hit the ball very hard, very flat, we go for a lot of risks, even if we're on the run. You know, we don't -- we're not gonna -- I would say at least 80% of the girls will try to go for a winner on the ground and just play aggressive tennis. So there will be more unforced errors, but also probably more amazing shots.

So I think there's a little bit of a balance. I think everybody obviously tries to, you know, have the matches where you would have made less than ten unforced errors in the whole match. We all try to achieve that. Sometimes it happens; sometimes it doesn't.

Q. I think you play Christina McHale tomorrow night. I haven't checked yet, but I don't think you're played her before. How do you prepare for a match like that?

KIM CLIJSTERS: I mean, that's obviously -- I've been in this situation a few times since I've

come back, that I've played players that I kind of don't know.

You know, at the end day, I just have to really focus on my game and on what I do best and try to get a feel for my opponent's game when I'm out there playing against them.

I watched a little bit of the match before -- you know, during, I think, Maria's match. I think just watched a little bit of that match. So you kind of get a feel for how she plays. Obviously it's still different watching it on TV and standing in front of someone.

Q. How much do you learn from the warm-up? I think Serena or someone said she learns a lot.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah, you do. You get a good feel for obviously the strength and the depth that the girls lay with. You see the serves a little bit. It's maybe not just the way they play, but you get to read their game and read their shots a little bit better. You see without even focusing I think, because we've played tennis for so many years that it becomes automatic that you read their strokes and you see, Okay they rotate a little bit more when they go crosscourt or they stand a little bit more open. Little things like that.

You kind of read that while you're playing. That come naturally obviously from the experience over so many years, I guess.

Q. You said you wanted to work on consistency. How would you actually do that in practice? Is it not just something that comes from playing and playing?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah, but I think that playing practice matches, obviously playing a lot of different girls leading up -- I think I've played against a few different girls here in the past, which is probably something that I didn't do that much before.

You know, this week I've hit with Lisicki, I've hit with -- who else? I can't remember. Petkovic. Just to have a few different type of players standing in front of me where you have to read their game differently and get a feel for the little details that you have to focus on in matches as well.

Obviously if I hit with my coach every day, I know when he goes for slides or when he wants to come in. You just know everything a lot better. That's something that, you know -- obviously when

I play Serena now, I also know how she plays.

You know each other because you have played each other so many times. Same with Justine. I mean, it's something that you get to feel, but it's the girls that you've never played before. That's when you kind of have to get a feel for it in the beginning of the matches.

Q. I noticed that you play so much faster than everybody else seemingly. You take very little time between points, especially on your serve. When you're playing less consistently, do you ever feel like you could slow down and stop rushing? When you start missing a couple shots, seems like you start rushing more and more, and that's when you miss.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah, that's probably been something that I've had since I've been six years old. It's one of my, yeah, one of my, you know, strengths and weaknesses, I think, certain times in matches. But, you know, that's me. You know, I like to get the next thing going.

I'm not gonna -- I don't think about points that I lose. I forget those and I just go on with the next shot. I try to take it -- you know, try to win the next shot and not think about what happened, if it was a bad shot. Just really try to read the game during the change of ends and see where you're at.

But during the games, yeah, you know, I don't -- maybe physically as well. You know, let it go fast. Let the opponent see who's better. (Laughter.)

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