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K. CLIJSTERS/C. McHale

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An interview with:

KIM CLIJSTERS

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Talk a little bit about Christina's game. Do you think she played like the 132nd player in the world?

KIM CLIJSTERS: I think she played much better. She has a big forehand. Obviously a little different than probably most of the girls that we see out there these days. She has a heavy forehand, and it bounces up. Good kick serve as well.

I think a lot of girls prefer the do that slice serve. She kind of has both there. She has a good slice serve, but she can really mix it up and put some really good kick serves out there. So that makes it a lot harder for a lot of girls that don't like to go too high with the backhand return.

You know, she moves well. I think her backhand, especially when she has to move out wide, there's a little bit of weakness. I think maybe if she becomes a little stronger where she can produce the same power on that backhand side as she can do on her forehand side.

I think, you know, that's obviously where I think today I scored on a lot points is when I pulled her out wide on those backhands.

Q. How do results in earlier in the day affect you, if at all, just with all the other seeds losing?

KIM CLIJSTERS: No, I mean, you don't think about it that much. I obviously I see the results, and I'm like, Oh.

But then again, it's not like they were major upsets the girls that played, I mean, there's Bartoli beating Wozniacki and Yanina Wickmayer beating

Na Li. I mean, they're all really good players. These days, anybody can beat anybody, I think.

And then Jankovic losing as well. I think that's probably the biggest upset today.

Q. So it didn't make you maybe focus on that part of your game a little bit more?

KIM CLIJSTERS: No, I mean, I was definitely a little bit more focused just for the fact that I was playing against somebody I never played against before. Kind of didn't, yeah, know what to expect when I started to go out there.

So I just really wanted to be focused in the beginning of the match and get a feel for her game. See, you know, how heavy that forehand actually is, and just try to read her serve and just her game a little bit. I did that pretty well, I think, from the beginning onwards. I felt more and more comfortable throughout the match.

Q. She commented that you were one of the players that she admires. You probably are now playing more of those types of players who admire you or admired you growing up. Can you tell us how that feels? And part B, maybe an example of when you did that when you were coming up.

KIM CLIJSTERS: I had a lot girls when I was that age that I really admired. I remember just whether it was Steffi Graf or Lindsay Davenport, Monica Seles, just being able to play against them, yeah, was so like special.

For me, it wasn't just playing matches, but seeing the way they prepare in the locker rooms, what did they drink, you know. Just little things you want to know and, yeah, learn a little bit more behind the professional athlete.

I think she's -- the girl I think she's 18, Christina?

Q. Yeah.

KIM CLIJSTERS: So when I look back and I hear 18 and she was born in '92, and I'm like the, Whoa. That's so young. Looking back, I was 15 or so.

Yeah, that's when you kind of just like -- to me it just all felt normal and natural. When I play somebody that's 18 or 17, I'm like, I'm getting old. (Laughing.)

But it's fun. I mean, I like seeing the young girls doing well and seeing those big names struggle against young girls as well. I think it's part of the next generation building up.

Q. Does an easy match like this, in a sense, does did make it more difficult to play your next match?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Um, no. I mean, I'm happy with the progress that I made from last night to tonight. I think definitely a lot more focused and played a lot better and served a lot better. So for me personally, those were definitely a few things that I wanted to achieve just for myself. And I did.

So no, I'm happy with the way that I played. Obviously the matches are going to become harder and harder. I play Pennetta now, so that will be, yeah, a really tough match.

Q. You only played her once before. Talk about that.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah, I think she's also one of the players that since I've come back, in those two years that I was away, she's really improved a lot. I think she's become physically a lot stronger, um, and has changed. She used to be a girl that would never really miss that much, but kind of would never hit that many winners either.

I think now she's still very consistent out there, but her serve has developed a lot better, and I think also her groundstrokes. Her backhand is definitely, you know, her stronger side. She can really -- she takes more risks without overdoing it, and still has the consistency on the baseline.

Q. You get really incredible crowd support wherever you go. This is a maybe one of the few occasions playing an American where it might be more even. Why do you think it is that crowds always seem to favor you?

KIM CLIJSTERS: I don't know.

Q. Is it a big help to you?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Of course it is a big help. It's always nice when you play players and you have the crowd support. You know, the thing is I'll always try to give my best. And, you know, even if the crowd is against me or for me, I'll

always try to find a mental strength out of the crowd support.

You try to let to make you feel better. Even if you're a little tired or drained, those are the things that kind of make you go a little bit harder and give yourself a little bit more.

I think it definitely helps, you know, I mean, especially the younger girls. When you see younger kids supporting you and clapping, I mean, that's fun. Not that I don't care about the older people, but it's obviously nice to see the kids play tennis and to kind of, you know, just look up to you in that way. It's nice.

Q. Can you remember the last time your opponent was heavily favored by the crowd?

KIM CLIJSTERS: To be honest, I don't think about that that much. I actually, no, don't remember.

Q. How much attention to you pay to the stats after a match, and which stats do you look at in particular?

KIM CLIJSTERS: I mean, one of the stats that I always like to have a look at is first serve percentage, which is one that in my game has kind of been going up and down a little bit. So that's definitely one that I like to have a look at.

Then also, you know, the normal ones. As a player, you know if you have a lot unforced errors or hit a lot of winners. You know how you just played that match. I mean, it's just a few numbers here and there, but it's a feeling that you have.

But obviously there's few little things. I mean, at some tournaments they really go into depth about the statistics. They have players first serves out wide, down the T, those kind of things.

Those are sometimes very interesting, when you can look at, you know, breakpoints. You know, there's a lot girls who will go down the T on breakpoints, and those are the little things you can actually read and remember when you're in those kind of situations. You know, if they're serving eight out of ten serves down the T, most likely in a tough situation they're gonna do the same thing.

It does help once in a while, but, um, to be honest, it's not that I'm like dying to see the statistics after each match or anything.

Q. You had the opportunity to play here last year. What do you think about the new

stadium renovations?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Beautiful. Beautiful. Obviously everything is, you know, looking forward to next year when the event is going to be combined. I think obviously there are a few men that are here now already.

Just having the bigger players' lounge, and I heard they're going to be building a few more courts for next year as well, I think maybe eight more courts. And in the future, maybe two years, building some biggest stadiums as well. Which is obviously, you know, when you have two big events like that you need it.

You know, I think I mean, it's fun. The players' lounge is nice; the locker rooms are definitely a lot nicer. Yeah.

Q. Is there much of a carryover affect - and I know you don't look at stats that much - but tonight you were dominant on almost every single thing. Service points won at 70%; return points won at 54%; only two double faults. I'm not going to go into the whole stats. I guess does that carryover into the next match, or is it so totally separate? It's nice, but has nothing to do with the next match.

KIM CLIJSTERS: I mean, it's nice to see the improvement obviously of last night's game to tonight's game. Obviously this doesn't guarantee that tomorrow the improvement is still going to be there.

But, yeah, mentally it helps you to have had a match like this and see the numbers go up. Like I said, I felt that already when I was out on the court. So it's not that the numbers, I need to be reassured from the numbers. I'm kind of more of a feeling person.

I felt that everything was going a lot better and had a better -- just the way that I was hitting the ball I felt better. That, to me, is obviously more important than seeing the numbers.

But then there are players that look at the stats and need that reassurance.

Q. Ana Ivanovic has had some disputes recently with the Montreal tournament directors about giving her a wildcard or not. When you made your comeback, twice, in '05 and '07, you were always able to get the wildcards that you needed. Any thoughts on that, and if former top players should be able to get wildcards into big events?

KIM CLIJSTERS: To be honest, I actually don't really know. I was just stretching and I read a

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little bit on the Tennis Channel about that, so I wasn't even, yeah, up-to-date. I guess I don't follow it that much. (Laughing.)

But, I mean, what can I say about it? It happened between Ana and her entourage or her management and the tournament there. Ana is still a big name to have at your tournament. She's playing better.

I've always felt with Ana it's only a matter of time before she's gonna have a lot of good results again. She works extremely hard and she's a nice girl. I think she's always a bonus to have for the fans, for the sponsors, and for the tournament.

So, yeah, I mean, doesn't matter that she hasn't had the great results in the last year or so. She's still a big name out there.

Q. As a follow-up to the question about the fans, do you have any advice for the young players who watch you?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Um, I mean, you know, obviously, you know, that the boys and girls are out there, it was just something that I've always liked to do. You know, I was able to go with my parents to the French Open a few times when I was younger. I think you learn a lot more from watching a match live than watching it on TV all the time. I think you actually really get a feel for the excitement and the emotions a lot better.

So I think that's obviously already a good step, you know, to be closer to the players and to get to know them. I know that the WTA especially, we've really tried to, you know, have a lot more contact with the fans. We're trying to really open up or widen the fan base and the contact that we have with the fans. So I think that's a good way also to get to know the players a little bit better.

Yeah, you know, don't look at us like superstars. We're just normal people, which is for a lot of kids also nice to know that, you know, if we can do it, they can do it as well.

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