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K. CLIJSTERS/A. Ivanovic

2-1 (ret.)

An interview with:

KIM CLIJSTERS

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. That one way to cut done your unforced errors.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah, no, I mean it's a shame that, you know, a match like this, especially for her, has to end like that. I mean, it was nice to see her do well this week and to play with some more confidence again, and then something like that happens.

I saw her after the match, and she's obviously upset. Her injury sounds very similar to what I recently had with my left foot. She's gonna have more tests later, and hopefully it's not that bad.

Q. What did she tell you about the injury?

KIM CLIJSTERS: She felt something crack. Just you know, not even with a wide shot, but she ran around her backhand and she hit a forehand. As she pushed off to the inside, she felt something crack.

Obviously to me it sounded very similar to what I had happen to me in Fed Cup. So I hope it's not that bad. But if it is, you know, it's not a good timing. It never is, but obviously now that is she's doing so well, it's a shame it has to happen.

Q. Talk about the pros and cons of having a day of rest before a final versus having another match under your belt.

KIM CLIJSTERS: I was telling my coach, too, I felt like actually out there today I was really into it. I felt like I was moving well and running well, and just the contact that I had with the ball

was a lot better then my previous matches just from the beginning onwards already.

So kind of was a little disappointed to not have that rhythm, whether I would have won or lost. I mean, it's nice to be on court and play a good and fun match like that. I think the tennis we were playing so far was a pretty high standard. So, yeah, I wish we obviously could have finished the match.

But, again, for me personally, it's nice to have started the match off playing better than I have been so far.

Q. You've had experience retiring from matches in the '06 Australian Open semifinal against Mauresmo. Talk about when you look back and how you recover mentally from having what happened in a match.

KIM CLIJSTERS: The thing is, you know straightaway there whether it's something serious or not. I think that's something that's a part of our job, is knowing our bodies. I think you know very well if it's a little strain or something that's gradually been building up. You kind of learn how to deal with it.

If it's something that happens during a match with your feet or legs, obviously it's something that has a big impact on the way you should be playing. I remember with my ankle in Australia, and I also had a hip injury there one time where I played with a tear my hip. It's frustrating.

But when something happens like on impact, yeah, it scares you. And afterwards, too. I remember with my foot it took me a while just to be able to move freely to that shot where it actually happened. That's obviously something that you have to get through.

And now, you know, I still -- it's still sometimes in my mind, but you just have to get over that fear and just keep pushing yourself over that limit, and it gradually goes away.

Yeah, I mean, like I said, you learn to live -- you learn how to deal with injuries and bodies, with different situations that happen to your body. But it's never easy.

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Q. Will it help you for that you didn't have to play a long match in the heat today?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Um, I don't know. I mean, like I said, I would have liked to have been able to finish that match and to just get a good feeling out there. To me, that is more important than playing the final. I would have loved to be able to finish this match and play some good tennis.

Whether I would have won or lost, it would have been nice to have that match. I've had three matches now, and gradually everything has been going better. And then, yeah, today I felt that I was hitting the ball better. It would have been nice to kind of pull that throughout the whole match.

Obviously, you know...

Q. What's your schedule for the rest of the day? Do you go back on the practice court?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Not anymore now with the rain. No, I ran for about a half hour or so. I was maybe thinking about coming back later or hitting maybe at 5:00. Obviously now there's a big storm out there. It'll take a while before it will clear and stop, so I'll just go back to the hotel and, yeah, just rest.

Q. You've never played Pavlyuchenkova, I don't think, before.

KIM CLIJSTERS: No.

Q. You are 4-3 against Sharapova. Talk a little bit about if you play Maria tomorrow. Obviously you can play Pavlyuchenkova, too. What challenges does her game present to you?

KIM CLIJSTERS: I think one of Maria's strengths is obviously with how flat and how hard and deep she hits her balls. It's hard when she gets on a roll to kind of break that rhythm.

She likes to just from the return onwards just really hit everything as flat and as hard as she can. You know, and she's really consistent at that. I think that's something that she showed again yesterday, which I think, to me, was kind of the first time -- maybe against Justine at the French Open she played a really good match where you kind of saw the Maria, the best Maria was back in there. I think it's great to see. She's a great fighter obviously. She never gives up, and she's serving a lot better.

Yeah, so I mean, if I play her, it's obviously you have to try to -- obviously making her run is still -- movement is still not her best part of the game. Obviously her groundstrokes, if she's behind the shot, it's as accurate as anybody, I think.

So obviously moving, and I want to be ready to retrieve a lot of the balls and just, yeah, defend well. At the same time, while I'm defending, just take over and try to get back into the advantage situation.

If I play Pavlyuchenkova, similar kind of thing. I think she's also a girl who hits the ball very clean, and once she's behind the shot, she's very accurate. She hits the ball hard; good serve, too. Obviously Maria has a little bit more experience. I think from the baseline Maria Sharapova is a little bit better.

I assume I'll be playing Maria, but this is sport; you can never assume too early.

Q. From the first time you played to when you've come back, who are the players you think have made the most improvement?

KIM CLIJSTERS: I think obviously when I started again, at the time I think to me, Safina at the time was a player that had improved a lot compared to two years before when I was still playing. And obviously she hasn't really been able to kind of continue the level that she had. But physically-wise and just everything, I think she's just become better.

Pennetta as well. Wozniacki was a girl that wasn't there when I was playing, so she plays a different game, I would say, than a lot other girls. She's very consistent and she doesn't make that many unforced errors, but she also doesn't take that many risks out there.

There are a few girls that probably -- that I'm forgetting. Pennetta is one of 'em, too, that I felt like she's changed her game a little bit to try to adapt to what she was -- the way that she was playing a few years ago and to the level that women's tennis has gone to.

Yeah, I mean, there are a few girls. We all try to achieve perfection, but obviously that's never gonna happen. I think if you're willing to work on weaknesses and change a few things here and there, it can only be a benefit you for your own game.

Q. Does your daughter remember

being on court with you during the US Open?

KIM CLIJSTERS: No.

Q. How much would a title really mean in terms of preparation for the Open? Either a title or maybe even you play really well tomorrow.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah, no, that's obviously, to me, even more important. I prefer to play well than play bad and win the title. That's what I'm looking for personally. Obviously it's nice to win titles.

When you play somebody like Maria or Pavlyuchenkova, I mean, if you play bad you're not gonna win probably. So unless, you know, you're just playing a really bad match -- so, no, I mean, obviously both would be the best situation.

For me personally, I'm more looking for playing a good match and feeling good within my own game. I think that's something that I'll keep looking for, you know, here and Montreal and until we go to the Open.

Q. You're playing all the way until Sunday here and getting as many matches as you could at this tournament. Since your goal is the US Open and defending your title there, at any point will you think, I have enough preparation; I'm gonna skip Montreal?

KIM CLIJSTERS: No, I don't want to have two weeks off before a Grand Slam. I like to just get there a few days before and practice on the courts at the US Open. No, unless I get injured or something, no, I will -- my schedule, I mean, is very -- it's planned and it's thought about, and it's something that I really feel that I need to play those extra matches.

I don't think that -- you know, obviously if I would have lost early here and would have lost early in Montreal, I mean, then I wouldn't have even added another tournament. I just want to keep it that way and keep that same rhythm kind of that I have.

Q. Since you rebooted your career here last year, would it probably be a little bit more special that, okay, you've completed your one year and you can walk away from here with the title, and then put you in the right frame of mind to return to defend your Open title, or...

KIM CLIJSTERS: Um, I mean, I really look forward to going back to the US Open and just being there and just living, yeah, just being there as a defending champion again. I think it's

something that -- you know, I love playing on hardcourts, and I've always done well in America playing on hardcourts.

To me, yeah, it's something that I enjoy. For some reason - maybe not this week - but I've always felt whenever I would go from a different surface to hardcourt, I always felt very comfortable moving and just timing-wise. It just always felt very easy for me to adapt.

But I do look forward to, yeah, just being at the Open. They asked me when I did the Tennis Channel about more pressure as the defending champion, but I really don't feel like that. Because to me, obviously last year was as big of a surprise to me as everybody else. So I'm really just looking forward to being there, and like I said, just playing good tennis.

Because I know if I play good tennis, if I play my best tennis, I can beat anybody. It's just a matter of being consistent and doing it seven matches if you want to win it.

Q. Do you feel like there are more injuries on tour than when you first started playing? If so, why?

KIM CLIJSTERS: I do think that the level and the intensity of women's tennis has become higher. I think Roger Federer is a guy who does everything so smoothly and naturally. I think he's also showing he doesn't have too many injuries just by the way that he plays. But there's not a lot of players that have that, yeah, those easy strokes like he has. It looks very simple.

To me, too, I feel like the amount of pressure that I put on my body under is very high during matches. I mean, I practice really hard and I workout really hard. But when I go to play matches, I mean, I'm sore where -- I've been training really hard to get where I'm at, and my practice sessions were a lot harder, I would think. But in matched you just always push yourself that little extra.

So it's just more demanding on the body, I think. We hit the ball a lot harder than when used to few years ago. And just physically, I mean, you don't see a lot girls loop a ball up anymore to try and have time to recover. Everybody will just try, even on the stretch, kind of out of unnatural kind of poses, try to go for winners again.

Q. I assume you're gonna watch the match tonight.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah. Either me or my coach.

Q. What are you gonna be looking for?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Um, I mean, I know Maria's game probably more. If Pavlyuchenkova starts doing well, I'll probably watch a little bit more just to read her game. Obviously if it's Maria, I know her. It's not like she's gonna be playing serve and volley the whole time. I know her game.

But obviously with Pavlyuchenkova, that's a girl who I haven't played against and who I haven't really seen play that much. I've seen her play some matches, but never played against her.

You kind of want to get look at how she serves and on big points where she serves. Just little things like that. But, yeah, I'm not gonna have my notebook, you know.

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