

**August 10, 2010**



**M. SHARAPOVA/S. Kuznetsova**

6-4, 1-6, 6-2

An interview with:

## **MARIA SHARAPOVA**

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Seemed like you had a lot of unforced errors tonight. Is that something that maybe is indicative of the first time you played here, just trying to get used to the court?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah. Also, I played a tournament about nine or ten days ago, and it's your first match and you have a tough opponent. Completely different conditions than you're used to. Um, you know, started off the match really muggy, and just felt like a lot of the balls from both my side and hers were just flying.

You know, you just kind of try to get control of everything, you know, from the groundstrokes to the serves. Sometimes I felt like I got a little unlucky and some were pretty close.

So just a matter of kind of staying consistent, and, you know, just really focusing on what I had to do instead of unforced errors.

**Q. The guys usually say this court plays faster than Toronto or Montreal.**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Right.

**Q. Did you agree with that assessment?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, it's -- I think the ball is pretty light. I don't think the court itself is super fast. I think it's pretty average. But since the balls are really light, it goes through the air almost like we're playing in altitude a little bit and jumps pretty high.

Against her that's tough, because she has so much spin on the ball. I think in the beginning I was just trying to adjust to that, and I was having a little bit of trouble.

**Q. When did you realize that maybe she was a little bit injured?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: You know, when you're out there playing, you really worry about yourself and just trying to win the match.

**Q. You took that heat index break between the second and third sets. You talked about how it affected your game, but physically how is the heat hitting you at that point?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, I mean, I definitely felt fresher after I came back from that place. It's good that it's in place, because it's quite important. Even though we're playing a night match, everyone in the stands has some sort of fan or something waving to make themselves cooler. It's pretty crazy to think that even in the night match that the fans have to do that.

So it's something that we have to adjust to. You're not used to playing a night match and sweating a lot and playing a long point and getting ready to serve or return on a big point. You know, those are kind of the little things that I had to adjust to today.

**Q. You hit 11 double faults today, and you've been sort of hitting more double faults recently, over the last year or so. How have you been able to shake off what must be a frustrating part of your game so effectively and still come away with wins?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: To be honest, I'm actually serving a lot better than I did last year summer. I'm hitting bigger serves. Maybe I'm missing a few more first and second serves, but I'm not hitting second serves 70 miles an hour.

I mean, I'm gonna win tournaments by going for my shots, whether it's off the groundstrokes and playing my game, or off the serve rather than waiting for my opponents to miss

and maybe not making as many unforced errors. That's not my game.

**Q. Does that confidence come from your shoulder feeling better? Is that directly related?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, if I'm doing the right thing -- and, I mean, today maybe I was certainly making a lot more errors off everything, off the return, you know, off my forehands and backhands. I mean, I definitely have to cut down on that.

But if I stick to doing the right things and not, you know, going in different directions, sooner or later that's gonna come back to me.

**Q. In your first game of the second set, first service game, you had two double faults and two unforced errors, and you got broken at Love. Was that a case of being maybe too aggressive?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Sloppy.

**Q. Sloppy?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah. I mean, you win the first set and play a good game to break her and then get the set, and, you know, come out and, you know, didn't play the first game aggressive.

You know, little things here and there, and all of a sudden it's -- tennis is a lot about momentum. You're playing against a tough opponent, certainly one that has a lot of experience. You give her a little fresh breath of air, and there's no doubt that she's gonna take it.

**Q. Do you remember the last time you played in this type of heat?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, it's not so much the heat; I think it's more the humidity. Just muggy.

But probably Australia. But the good thing about Australia is you have those days in between to recover. This is an event for someone that's not seeded, ahem -- oh, I am, actually. Wait. I am. I don't have a bye -- you play six matches in seven days.

So, yeah, it's one of those things, but everyone has to go through it. We all have to adjust. That's the way it is. Sometimes you almost have to think the Grand Slams are a bit easier because you have the day in between to rest, recover, and get your body ready.

**Q. You said in the second set she came on a lot stronger. What was your mindset at the beginning of the third set then to try and change the momentum?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, just be aggressive. Um, you know, I feel like I let her off the hook in the beginning of the second set, and she went with it.

Like I said, against a player that has a lot of experience, you can't do that. She's not gonna give it back to you. You have to earn it back. The only way I was gonna get that back was by being aggressive.

**Q. What are you most pleased with about in your game tonight in terms of things you did well?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, I think I played some of the important points well. I took my breakpoint opportunities. You know, on days when you don't feel like your game is where you want it to be, you know, you try to look at the positives.

I feel like on some of the important points I got through them. The good thing is I got through the match, and you have another one ahead of you.

**Q. You've won a lot of tough matches obviously at the Grand Slams without on-court coaching. How does it change the match, do you think? When you talk to Michael, what does he talk to you about? Is it ever helpful? Not helpful? What's that like for you?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: It's more words of encouragement than anything else. It's not like -- you know, a coach, certainly not for me, are not gonna start telling me to change something technically. You know, sometimes you see a little bit different from an outside perspective of what's going on of the few mistakes you're making or the patterns that you're doing a bit wrong.

But it's actually pretty straightforward. It's more to get yourself going than anything else. There's not much that -- if you can't play on your own and try to figure out tactics and all those things on your own, then at the Grand Slams, like you said, it's gonna be pretty tough to do on your own.

**Q. I believe your father is still listed as your official coach even though Michael is doing most of the traveling. Do you plan on**

**changing that?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Where is that listed?

**Q. On the WTA website.**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Oh. Got to change that. He hasn't been traveling for like a year and a half. I don't know why it's on there.

Um, I mean, my dad is still a big part of my tennis career. During the off-season or when I'm home, probably 50% of time he's there just on the court and he has a few pointers.

It's great to have him, because I was used to having him travel all the time. There's no one like him that knows me as best as he does from my mistakes and my attitude and the way to get me going and to get my intensity up. So it's always fun to have him. But Michael has definitely taken that role from him.

**Q. After taking four weeks off after Wimbledon, you came back and you only played one World Tennis event, but you still made it to the semifinals at Stanford. How did you accomplish that?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: There's an error in your question, because I made it to the finals of Stanford. (Laughter.) But that's okay. We all make mistakes. I made plenty of them today. (Laughter.)

Yeah, after -- I was on the road -- you know, before I played the French Open until after Wimbledon, I was on the road for about ten weeks, so I definitely needed some time off to recharge my batteries and to get back to the roots and get back on the practice court.

It's always important before that last hardcourt season to work on the few things that you feel like you need to work on, and, yeah, and get ready for the summer tour.

**Q. But to follow that up, you didn't do that much. You had all that time off, and then you come back so strong though so quickly.**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, I mean, I had some tough matches over there, and, um, you know, tough opponents in Stanford. Some that I lost to in my previous matches, so it was really important to -- I mean, in all these tournaments you really got to be ready from the first match. There are no easy opponents now. You got to be ready.

I mean, you know, playing Kuznetsova in the first round is not -- unfortunately, she wasn't seeded here, so it was unfortunate that we had to

play. Usually it's a match that we play in the quarters or semis or finals.

So like I said, every tournament you got to be ready from the getgo.

**Q. Speaking of that, seems like there's a lot more of those types of the matches where Grand Slam champions are playing in the first round. Do you feel like at this point more than at any other time in your career you're seeing more of that?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I think the level of the game is a lot higher than it ever was. You know, maybe before the first few rounds were, you know, a bit of a cake walk in a way, or the score's a little on the easy side. You don't see that that much these days.

I the level of someone, even someone that's 50 in the world is a really solid, tough player that has won tournaments, that has also had experience. And also, you know, the young ones that are coming up. It's crazy I don't consider myself young anymore. (Laughter.)

But they're also tough because they're fearless and they go out there and they're opponents that really have nothing to lose.

**Q. How do you like Cincinnati so far?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Well, which part, the Waffle House? (Laughter.) It's like back to the challenger days. I played many of those in my career.

No, it's great. I mean, like I said, it's good to be at a tournament for the first time for me, because I'm so used to the routine of the same tournaments throughout the year.

And my schedule this year, um, you know, a change in the summer coming here. But it's great. I mean, conditions are obviously tough for all of us, but it's something that we get used to.

**Q. Do you feel like tonight's match set the tone for the tournament?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, I feel like it was definitely -- from my perspective it was definitely a match I can take a lot of things and try to change maybe a few things going into next round. You know, take the positives of winning the match and not playing my best tennis and going forward and trying to work on a few things in the next one.

