

August 20, 2011



M. SHARAPOVA/V. Zvonareva

2-6, 6-3, 6-3

An interview with:

MARIA SHARAPOVA

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You talked to your coach after the first set. What did he say to you and how did that affect you going on?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I didn't do a lot of talking. He talked most of the time. Yeah, I think when I called him I just felt like I needed a little bit of energy, something that was really missing in the first set.

I was late on a few shots, and when I had a few chances to put pressure on her in 30-All or deuce games on her serve, I made an unforced error. I really didn't let her think out there.

I felt like the second set, if I could just be more aggressive, move my feet a little bit more, I could change a few things around.

Q. What exact changes did you make in your service game in terms of being able to break her later in the match a lot more, obviously, than the first set?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, looking back at the first set, I felt like, I mean, most importantly was when I did have those chances I really didn't take them. Like in the last few matches I really felt like I stepped it up in those situations, those positions, and I just didn't have that in the first set today.

Sometimes it happens. Best-case scenario is that you change it around; I did today.

Q. Your second serve doesn't like a whole lot different than your first serve right now. Do you try to do anything on your second serve to make it more likely to go in than your first?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, you know, sometimes I feel like I would like it to be a little bit slower. Sometimes if it's in the upper 90s, obviously going for it is better than trying to just get it in. That's really the way my game is and the way I play. That's when I do well in all my shots.

But, yeah, sometimes I feel like I lack a little bit of spin on the second one.

Q. Is that something you're trying to add then?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, absolutely. It's a part of my game that I'm working on, and I'm trying to get better.

Q. I only caught part of your interview with Mary Joe Fernandez, but you talked about making adjustments in the second and third sets. Was that more on the return game more on your serve or everything, that you changed the game plan midway through the match, it wasn't working?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, I think based on the first set it was a little bit of everything really. The game is not just about one shot. Sometimes it's just putting a whole point together and doing it one after another.

Yeah, like I said, just really to do something that made her think a little bit more out there than just giving it to her.

Q. After some of the dropshots you hit today, do you think you should incorporate more of that into your game? That was pretty good.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Thank you. (Laughing.) Is that a suggestion?

Q. I'm just asking. It's a question.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, I guess. I mean, if they always turn out that way, then why not?

Q. Do you think they're especially good for you because you hit with such flat pace otherwise that people expect it even less from a player with your kind of playing style, a dropshot?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: If that's the way they think, then great. I don't do it because I think Oh, I hit a big shot and I'm going to hit a dropshot now. I think more of, Okay, now I want them to move forward. Yeah.

Q. When your coach comes over, does he talk tactics or is it more of a pep talk?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I think it's more about energy. I'm not really too much of a tactic type of player. You know, I like to play by instinct a little bit more. Of course, obviously every player you play there are a few things that you know about them or you think that will work good against them. But then you get to the match and sometimes the reality is a little bit different as well.

In the first set I really thought there was not much energy in my game.

Q. Talk about how you match up with either Petkovic or Jankovic. You've got head-to-head advantages and you don't care how you're playing, but just talk about the matchup.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I haven't played Jelena in quite a while, and I played Petkovic at the French Open, another time Miami. So we've played a couple times this year.

But, yeah, either way I think it's more about what I do out there and really focusing on the right things to do in order to win the match.

But it's the final, so whoever it will be obviously has been playing good to get there.

Q. You came back out after that first set, after the pep talk, and you did really well. You came out strong. Was there a point in that either that set or the next set where you felt like you had the confidence and the control of the match? Was any particular moment you felt like the tides turned?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I felt it in my footwork a little bit. I felt like -- even some points I lost I felt like I started moving a little bit better. It's not like one point you say, Oh, wow. Now I'm

really going to turn things around. I mean, it's pretty tough to do in the middle of the match. If you do, that's great self-esteem.

Yeah, it's more about just starting to feel good and get in a good groove.

Q. You've had a really great, strong summer building up momentum going into the US Open. How much are you enjoying the struggle to get back to the top and get these titles and to make these deep runs at the slams?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: You know, I can say that I was faced with adversity a few times in my career and through injury, and I've had to make many decisions on how to move forward and how to make myself a better player.

So to be in these stages of tournaments, it's gratifying and means a lot to me. You know, my motivation this year and my level out on the practice courts and little things have definitely stepped up from the past year.

I think little by little, with some luck and hard work, things sometimes go more your way than others. But it's a life of an athlete. You know, one day everything is great and one day something can happen.

So I think I try to be level-headed on many things that come my way: wins, losses injuries, personal things. It's just about keeping a pretty streamlined life.

Q. How much would a title like this help you going into the US Open?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, it would be great. Absolutely. You know, there is obviously a great confidence boost. I came here wanting to play a lot of matches, to be in the final. To give myself another chance to get the title is great.

Q. You said your footwork was better. Is that something you consciously have to do, or is it you having more energy and you feel like you're doing it?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I think it's the flow of things. You know, if you're looking to be aggressive on a shot, I think automatically you kind of like to move into the ball instead of waiting for it and then being aggressive.

I think it's also a mindset you have, you know, trying to give yourself that spark.

Q. You could play Jelena Jankovic tomorrow, which you mentioned before. I know you've had in your past a lot contentious matches with her. Talk about your history with her and how playing her is different than playing another player for you.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, if she wins, like I said, we haven't played against each other for a while, so it'll be nice to compete against one another. We've known each other since we were very young. We grow up in Florida together in the same sort of group. Going back in the juniors, we played a lot of the matches against each other and we had many battles.

And here we are, you know, on professional tennis level. So, yeah, I think we know each other's game quite well. It's good to see her back at this stage. She's a great player. She was No. 1 in the world, so it's no joke.

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