

August 16, 2011



M. SHARAPOVA/A. Rodionova

6-1, 6-3

An interview with:

MARIA SHARAPOVA

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. So how did that match go? Pretty much as you anticipated?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, I started off the match quite well. Few ups and downs in the second set, but I finished it well.

Yeah, it was good to play a match tonight.

Q. Maybe a little challenge might be what you need in the second set, a little adversity so you don't get too cocky, I guess, or whatever? Or would you prefer to just sail right through?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Well, whichever situation you're put in, the goal is just to get through it and challenge yourself if it occurs that you find yourself in that position, just to challenge yourself and find a way to get through it.

Q. You said in the All-Access Hour that you wanted to have a great week here because you haven't played as many matches as you wanted to and want to do well. It's also a tune up for the US Open. Do you think this is a good start to launch your week?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, definitely. I thought I played aggressively, yeah, and felt better than I did last week, definitely.

Q. What are the keys to having a really good return of serve in your mind?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, you know, preparing early and, you know, also having good anticipation. You know, having good reaction.

Also obviously being aggressive on it and having that mindset.

Q. According to the stats, you have the best return of serve in the women's game this year. Is that something, a part of your game that you really concentrate on?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I'm not a stats type of person. I don't think they're always very accurate. Not in terms of percentages and all that, but as an overall package.

Q. Does that surprise you that you are 1 in that statistic?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I don't know if it surprises me. I mean, I work on my return, and obviously I want it to be good and great.

So if it's at that, then, yeah, it's great.

Q. We hear about players that are aggressive versus defensive. Do you consider that two categories of players or just a range?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Just different styles of play. Someone with maybe big groundstrokes or powerful shots is probably considered to be a more aggressive type player. Or when they are, that's probably when they're doing their best and using their weapons.

You know, I would say defensive is not necessarily bad. It can bring a lot of positives as well.

Q. What do you think about having the men and women combined in the same week? Do you like it?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, just a more crowded player lounge. A lot more banana peels lying around and empty water battles. (Laughter.)

No, from a fan's perspective I think it's a great week of tennis. You see all the locals driving up an hour or two and making a few good days out of it, and not only seeing everyone play and practice, you see all the practice courts jammed and everyone is getting ready for the Open.

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So I think it's one of the best tickets in town, if not the best.

Q. Big Babe tennis, are you familiar with that term and what does it mean to you?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: No, not at all.

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