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K. CLIJSTERS/F. Pennetta

7-6, 6-4

An interview with:

KIM CLIJSTERS

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You had 39 unforced errors. Just talk about that. Are the conditions affecting that? Maybe gripping racquet, is it slipping a little bit?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Obviously your hands are a little bit more wet than playing, you know, in a more dry kind of atmosphere. But, no, I mean, that's not the reason why the unforced errors are there. They're there because I still don't feel that everything is going naturally the way that I would want it to go. I'm really just trying to work for each point, and obviously sometimes I want to play without having to worry about not feeling the shot.

And then obviously you have to stay take some risks once in a while and you're gonna make some unforced errors. But my game, if I play my matches -- or some of best matches I've played is where you're kind of in the zone where you don't have to think about it. You step into the court, you move forward, stay on top of your baseline, don't let the opponent push you away.

And obviously, you know, when you don't have that rhythm, it's hard to play that best from the beginning. You know, I felt that there were moments where it was good and moments obviously where it was not good.

You know, when I played -- especially against Flavia, you know, she's become more aggressive. She hits definitely more winners than probably what she used to a few years ago. But on the other hand, she's consistent from the baseline, so you kind of have to go for a little bit more to try to just, yeah, just raise that level during the rally.

That's probably been one of my strengths, is I can go, just keep rallying, and out of nowhere come up with a little bit of an acceleration. I think when you don't have 100% of confidence or you don't feel that you're just hitting everything the way that you want it to go, sometimes the unforced errors can build up.

That doesn't mean that I'm not gonna keep trying to achieve my best level.

Q. Can you ever play the way you were describing? When was the last time you remember playing like that?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Oh, no, there's -- I hope there's a few matches...

Q. You know what I mean.

KIM CLIJSTERS: No, there's a few matches each tournament obviously where you feel like, Okay, I'm hitting the ball very clean and the ball is going where you want it to go.

Obviously nobody is ever going to have a match where you don't hit any unforced errors, but where you feel like, yeah, you're hitting ball really well and kind of the ball is going where you want it to go. I think that's the feeling that we all try to achieve.

But obviously that situation is probably more, you know -- or the percentage is probably, you know, lower to have those kind of matches. But you try to achieve 'em.

In a Grand Slam, you might have two or three matches like that where you kind of feel like you're in the zone, but the other four, you have to be -- mentally you have to try to, yeah, just beat the opponent, and just with your B game still try to be, you know, good players.

I think that's what a lot of the top players do really well, is obviously save the best when you have to. But in the tough matches, even the other opponents, even if you don't play your best tennis, still with your B game be good enough to beat those players.

Q. How do you get into a rhythm if

you're not in one in order to do well in a match? Is it just a feel type thing? Like in warmups you can tell it's gonna be a tough day?

KIM CLIJSTERS: I mean, obviously in warmups it's a little bit different, because everybody these days -- you know, I hit with a lot girls in practice, and if you go down the middle, I mean, everybody has a good feel then. I mean, if you're already struggling then, then it's kind of hard.

But it's, I guess, the timing of moving, you know, stepping forward, stepping backwards, stepping sideways, the racquet, that whole combination I think is what, yeah, you have to -- you know, you need to have that rhythm. Obviously you play a different player each match, so you're gonna have different types of shots coming at you and different types of players.

If you play the same player all the time, it's a lot easier to read those games. I think that's what is probably making, you know, probably for me a big difference now is I don't play these girls as much as I probably did in the past. Whenever I'm in front of them, I have to, yeah, get a feel for it.

Q. You came back last year in Cincinnati, so happy anniversary.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Thank you.

Q. Have you taken stock of like Kim 2.0 and what you're doing maybe better than what you were doing before and what you would like to do better compared to what you were doing before you left?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Um, yeah, I mean, obviously there's a lot of things. I mean, obviously my strengths will always be with the speed that I hit the ball; the weaknesses are, of course at this stage, I think is the inconsistency. That is something that I really want to focus on.

It's a decision -- like I said before, it's my decision not to play 20 tournaments a year. In the past I used to get my match rhythm from matches. And, you know, when I was hitting ball the well -- you know, I like playing a lot matches, but obviously now my life is different, and I don't have that desire to play a lot of tournaments.

I want to peak and I want to -- that's why I'm very happy that I've had three matches here. I felt that each match has gone better and better, and I think that's obviously what I'm looking for personally?

Q. Was Pennetta's serve giving you a little bit of problems today? You broke her three times, but it looked like you had a little bit of a problem converting on the breakpoints. 21%. I don't know if that's low.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah, it is. Again, it comes down to reading your opponents. I think sometimes -- you know, she definitely has a very good, nice looking, I think, service motion. And obviously when you play girls like Dementieva or other girls who don't have that consistency in their serve and in their ball toss, it's a little bit easier to read their serve.

But I think, you know, Pennetta has a consistent serve. She maybe is not the hardest hitter out there, but she places it really well. Obviously that's something that I've learned over the years, too, that placement is by far the best weapon on your serve.

Q. Have you practiced with Flavia since you've come back?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah. Yeah. No, we've hit together, yeah.

Q. This is a little off-match topic, but Twitter, I know you're on Twitter. We follow you, and we're part of the social media team that's here covering the tournament. Can you kind of talk about how social media has kind of changed your relationship or maybe brought you closer to the fans? Did you use it when you were away and now that you've come back?

KIM CLIJSTERS: No, I mean, I don't think it really existed when I was away. But, um, obviously times have changed. I mean, in the past, you know, I was probably more replying to fan mails by writing letters and sending postcards, some of this saves me a lot of time. (Laughing.)

So that's -- in a way it's nice to interact with the fans like that. Obviously it's not something that I'm thinking about every day. But it's nice when you have an hour off and just resting in your hotel room and you don't have much to do, I mean, it's very easy to just answer a few questions or just interact with the fans a little bit.

And, um, I mean it's fun. Once in a while there's some funny comments on there. It's just, yeah, a way of like socializing I think with your fans and just get to know them and they get to know me in a different way a little bit as well.

Q. Different way than outside of the court?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yep. Sure. Yeah, it's nice once in a while when I'm out here at the courts to see somebody. It's like, Hey, I'm this, and you replied to my question. I'm like, Oh, nice. You actually get to see them in person as well, so that's nice.

Q. You Tweeted that you had some extra caps, and meet me at the front gate. Did somebody actually come out there?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah, yeah, there were two guys. They were like, Oh, I read your Tweets. Fila sent me some stuff out today. I was like, Oh, I have a big head, so the hats didn't really fit me. I was like, Oh, maybe I can give it to some people out here because it's been really hot, so they can probably use it.

Q. The tiebreaker could have gone either way. Do you think you gained a little bit of psychological edge given the weather conditions? She would've had to win two sets, you know.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Yeah, of course. I think we all -- we're all professional athletes, and we know if the first set is won or lost it doesn't mean you won the match. But to win a set -- for me, especially it was a comforting feeling knowing that I didn't play my best tennis but I was still able to beat a player who's been playing well and to win that first set when it was really close.

That's something that for me was obviously, you know, an important advantage to have.

Q. And then talk a little bit about you're gonna play Ana tomorrow. You only played her once before in Antwerp three years ago. What do you have to do well to pull through that match? What do you have to cut down on in your own game?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Unforced errors. (Laughter.) No, um, I think, you know, obviously I'm gonna have to look for the good medium I think. Still play aggressive tennis obviously, because that's what a lot of the girls do those days, is whenever they get the chance to go for winners, try and do that.

So I'm obviously going to try to just, yeah, dominate the rally a little bit. I think that's something that I didn't really do too well in the

beginning of my two sets today, is where I kind of just let her get into -- step into the court and really just move forward and hit more winners than I did.

That's something that I'll probably have to avoid tomorrow as well. Obviously Ana has bigger groundstrokes than Pennetta. Her serve can be a little tricky once in while. You know, it can be a little up and down. But when she's serving well, it's a tough serve to read and to get back.

I'll obviously have to return really well, and like I said, just put her on her back foot and try to just, you know, step into the baseline and dictate the points. I mean, everything has to, you know, get better.

Q. Do you feel like there's a correlation between a player's off-court personality and their on-court game? For example, is it hard for a laid back person to be aggressive on court?

KIM CLIJSTERS: Um, I don't know. I don't know. (Laughter.)

Q. It's easy to criticize obviously sitting in the press box watching a match. But a little bit about the conditions, what adjustments you had to make in your game to deal with the tough conditions this week.

KIM CLIJSTERS: I mean, I've probably been lucky that I've had two night matches in my first two rounds, which also, in a way, I kind of felt like when I came out there -- I was like, Whoa, this is really hot because I wasn't in these conditions.

I obviously practiced here when I came few days earlier. But these last few days I just tried to avoid the heat just to save my energy for my matches at night. So when I came out today it was really hot and burning. So in between the games, you try to just, yeah, cool off with the ice bags and the ice towels.

Q. Does it influence your strategy? Will you be more aggressive maybe to try and get out quicker?

KIM CLIJSTERS: No. No. I mean, I don't think it influences the way that you play unless you feel really drained and you feel like, you know, you can't handle the long rallies. I mean, of course that's when you want to, you know, keep them as short as possible.

But, no, they didn't really -- it's like you have another opponent. You know, it's not just

playing Pennetta, it's like your playing the heat. You have to just try to find a lot of little details, little solutions to make you just, yeah, be fit throughout that whole match and mentally stay fit throughout that.

And I think to me, you know, just focusing on my breathing is something that really works for me. And especially to recover after long rallies to just recover after -- to get your breath back and stay cool and not worry too much about the heat and not think about it, I think.

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