

August 13, 2010



M. SHARAPOVA/M. Bartoli

6-1, 6-4

An interview with:

MARIA SHARAPOVA

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Did you feel as dominant as you looked tonight?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, I was playing a really high level throughout the whole match. That was really important, because she's been playing really good tennis this week. I knew that from my previous matches I really had to step it up. She was a different type of opponent that didn't give you much time and just really is aggressive. I kind of had to take it to her from the beginning, which many things were going well for me.

Then had a bit of a hiccup with those two games in the end. I was fortunate that I just stayed focused in the end and won it.

Q. You just lost one point on your serve all night. What did you screw up on?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: (Laughter.) No, you know, sometimes it's almost, you know, harder, because when you feel like things are going your way and, you know, the rhythm is there, you know, you're playing really solid, doing all the right things, and all of a sudden you're one game away from winning the match and everything being perfect, then you almost do a little too much.

Q. What do you think happened in that 5-2?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, you know, I think from the first point I was just a little bit more

tentative. I stepped back a little bit more. In tennis, momentum is so big. From point to point you never really know.

Your opponent gets a breath of fresh air, and all of a sudden the swing changes. You know, I was fortunate I was up two breaks. Even though I lost my serve, I just kept going at it.

No matter how things went in one or two games, you're up a set and you're up a break.

Q. Your first serve was really good for the most part all night. 73% in the first and then it went down a bit in the second.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, quite a bit.

Q. What kind of happened on the serve in the second set just in general?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I think the rhythm went off really. I was rushing things. I think I was hitting, like you said, a lot of first serves, a lot big first serves. I almost wanted -- instead of maybe being a little bit more smarter maybe went for a little bit too much and gave her the opportunity to have some looks on the second serve.

Q. When you're playing that well, do you worry about, Oh, my God, am I gonna fall out of this kind of zone or semi zone that I'm in?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, I was still making some errors. It wasn't like I was hitting a winner on every single ball. I was playing solid tennis and doing the right things against my opponent, which I felt I had no other choice but to do it or she's someone that plays really well. If she's up a little bit she's a great frontrunner.

You just have to, I guess -- that's the thing about tennis. You're out there for whatever amount of time, and you want to make sure you're focused and concentrated. You're always gonna of a few little lapses here and there with a few errors. It's about how you get yourself back up instead of worrying about what happened.

Q. You told Mary Joe that like watching

Federer in terms of picking up stuff. What you get from his game watching him that you maybe have applied to yours?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, it's a lot of fun. There's so much different variety. You know, the way he keeps his cool and the way he's able to play so many different types of games and really know where his opponent is around the court.

He has so many great shots, so many different options. That's fun to watch.

Q. Have you ever thought about playing mixed doubles with him at a slam?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Considering I haven't played doubles in a really long time, probably not.

Q. This is your first time here and also first time playing Pavlyuchenkova. Talk about that matchup and what you're expecting from that.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I mean, when you're in the semifinal and you're playing against an opponent for the first time, obviously you know they're doing something well and they're playing really great.

She's someone that's already had really good results in her career. Someone that's slowly been coming up and has really good results. So I know that it's gonna be tough, and she's gonna go out there with not much to lose and play really well. So definitely have to be ready.

Q. Have you seen her play before?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Um, a little bit. A little bit, yeah.

Q. Were you surprised that Marion didn't try to change it up, especially in the second set when she was kind of playing into your hands, giving you a lot of pace and you were just knocking off winners?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I don't think changing up is really her way of playing. Yeah, I think she sticks to what she does best and keeps going after it.

Q. You mentioned with your serve, you know, kind of losing it a little bit towards the end there. Did she also take some pace off your groundstrokes? I think Mary Joe thought she might have.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I did or she did? I did?

Q. Yeah, that's what she thought.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Right. Um, I mean, yeah. I think it was more the fact that I kind of took a few steps back. That's what happens. All of a sudden you're maybe not moving as forward as fast as you should or you take a step back and find yourself jumping up a little bit, and obviously that takes a lot of pace off the ball when you're not looking and moving forward.

Q. In terms of the big picture, your season as whole and where you are going into the US Open, how far away from where you would like to be are you in terms of your form?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Well, these tournaments have been great for me so far. I've played against different types of players, you know, some players that have been challenging and I've had to come through. I think that's the greatest preparation you can have is find yourself in different positions whether you're winning or whether you find yourself down a set, and really find a way to win.

Q. Talk about the final four that are left. There are three Grand Slam champions among you and no winners here before. What challenges do you all have in that small pool?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Well, it's the later stages of the tournament. You've got two more matches to go. I think at this point, we all just go out there and we want to play our best tennis, because that's the stage of tournament where it really matters.

Q. How much would a title here mean for you in terms of preparing for the Open, and also first time here, possibly get a title? Given the injuries and things you've had to overcome, how big would it be for you to walk away with the title here?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, a title is always great, but we're only at the semifinal stage. As boring as it sounds, it's usually the same answer. You always look forward to the next one, no matter who you're playing.

Q. Do you think that there's a correlation between a player's personality off court and their on-court playing style? For example, if someone is really laid back on

court, do you think it's harder for them to be aggressive on the court?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I think everyone's different. It's tough to say. Um, I'm definitely not as tough on the court as I am on the court, thank goodness. I'd not have many friends. (Laughter.)

No, I think it's just when you're on the court, when we're playing our matches or when we're training, it's our job, and we really have to be focused at what we do.

I think being laid back is great and it's really fun. But at the end of the day, we're really big competitors. We compete out there and we want to win. It's a fighting sport.

But when we get off the court we talk to our team about the match, and then we have another life that we live which is away from the courts which is pretty normal.

Q. This is more of a general question. Going into a match like tonight's, is it more of a confidence booster facing someone who you've beaten all the times you've played?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Even though I have a good record against her, we haven't played in a really long time. I think from last time we played I think her level definitely improved, and she's had great results since the last time we played.

So I think you don't play somebody for that amount of time, it's tough to look at those results.

Q. Is there anything about your match tonight that you weren't happy with performance-wise, technically?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I should have definitely closed it out and not really given her that chance to look into the match and say, Maybe I've got a little bit of a chance.

But, you know, that's the sport. Yeah.

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