

August 21, 2011



M. SHARAPOVA/J. Jankovic

4-6, 7-6, 6-3

An interview with:

MARIA SHARAPOVA

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Kind of a topsy-turvy crazy game really.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: It was a really tough one out there. It was so physical, and obviously it's something to expect when you're playing Jelena. You know, there is no secret she's a great mover and gets so many balls back.

Yeah, in the end, it could have gone either way. We kept breaking each other in the beginning. Felt like one of us played a few good points and then the other one and the levels were up and down throughout the match.

So, yeah, I'm just fortunate that at the end of the day I'm the winner.

Q. At 2-3 in the second set tiebreaker, you were down and went on a run of five straight points to win the second set. What was the key to putting those five points together to really get back in the match?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, that's pretty much it: Putting five points together that were well-played. I think I really forced her to make those mistakes. I hit the ball deeper than I probably was.

But, yeah, like I said, there were ups and downs. You know, I felt like when I had my chances and breakpoints, I would go for the shot and then sometimes miss quite long. Sometimes it was only an inch.

It was like when are you actually going to put a few games together and things are going to go your way. It's a little frustrating.

Overall, on a day like this when it's up and down and you're not playing your best tennis, sometimes it's even better when you end up being the winner.

Q. Was there a point where you felt, Okay, now things are definitely going my way; this is it?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I think you just feel like maybe you were stepping up and playing better. But as far as, okay, knowing you're going to win the match, I don't think that's really a good way to look at things. You can encourage yourself and know that you're playing better, that you're starting to maybe do the right things again.

But, yeah, I don't really think that, oh, I'm going to win the match.

Q. With this title and your previous title in Rome and Wimbledon final, you're now No. 1 in the year in the rankings race. Talk about how your year is going. Obviously pretty well.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: You just answered your own question right there. (Laughter.) Is that a journalist mistake?

Q. Probably.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Obviously to follow up on your answer, yeah, it's been a great year so far. It can always be better and can always be worse. So I'm definitely proud that I've gone further and better than I did last year.

It means a lot to me after a disappointing loss here last year. Of course to be in that position in the race it's always nice, because it's pretty much from the beginning of the year. So to be up there, it's nice.

Q. Seemed like right after the second set tiebreak going into the third set, three straight breaks on both sides.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Uh-huh.

Q. What was causing that? Conditions a little too humid? Gripping the racquet? It's unusual.

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, of course. But you find yourself in the third set and you've played over two hours, so it's the final match. Obviously a lot of emotions going through both of us.

But, yeah, I felt like actually both of us were up in those games and then the other one got them. So like I said, it was a little bit of up and down within those games as well.

Q. I felt like you had a lot of crowd support out there. Probably 75% or more. Did it feel like that to you?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, I mean, the crowds here have been great throughout the whole week I felt like, from the beginning of the tournament, which usually you see a lot more people coming in towards the end of the week and for the bigger matches.

But I think because of so many good players that were here this week there was so much support. When the crowd is there and they're into their sport and their tennis, of course you feel that energy, no doubt.

Q. As far as form, fitness, and confidence going into the US Open, is this about as good as you could have hoped for?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, it's great to have a win under your belt going into a major. Absolutely. I played some good matches. Yeah, it's great to have this win. I came here wanting to play matches and wanting to raise my level, and I think I did that.

Q. 61 unforced errors seems like a lot in a three-set match for you. Is that a concern going into the Open? What's driving that? How do you cut that down?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, it's definitely up there. But then again, I think we had really long games and a lot of points were played. It was about a three-hour match, so, you know, statistics I think can only tell you some things. It's very relative.

But, yeah, that's the way it is, I guess. But I would love to see that number down, no doubt.

Q. Because you finished as runner-up last year, was that additional incentive or something that stuck in the back of your mind as you headed into this tournament run?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yeah, it was a tough one. I was so close last year, so it's nice to have that feeling of being the champion after going through a tough one last year.

It wasn't really something I thought about coming in this week. I just knew that I played some good tennis here last year, and I hoped that I could take it a step further.

Q. How much pressure do you put on yourself going into the US Open this year?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Pressure is part of our sport, and nerves and all that, adrenaline. I think if nobody feels that, it's pretty unhuman. So it's really about how you deal with it. It's a Grand Slam. It's a huge event for us, and the matches and the opponents and the pressure and the crowd, it's all part of the package. And it's really about how you handle everything.

Q. You obviously did a lot well to win here. What are the things you feel like you want to work on going into the US Open?

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Well, of course I would love to, you know, have those unforced errors a little bit lower than, say, this match. I could definitely serve better as well and have a higher percentage.

But then again, at some points in this tournament I felt like a few times it's actually saved me in placement and sometimes speed.

So I think you can always improve in different areas of the game. You can always be quicker, anticipate faster, you know, be better from the beginning of a match, things like that.

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