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**Western & Southern
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MASTERS & WOMEN'S OPEN

I. KUNITSYN/J. Blake

7-6, 6-7, 6-4

An interview with:

IGOR KUNITSYN

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. That was a guy that you hadn't had a lot of success against before. What was the difference today? I mean, obviously he's just coming back after his foot problems, but...

IGOR KUNITSYN: I think the key -- I mean, I obviously have more experience playing top players right now, because I been like -- a year and a half I been playing pretty much tour events only. On like the two previous occasions -- just like two, three times a year I was playing tour events and mostly challengers.

So it was a big crowd, big stadium. You know, it was not the conditions I used to play. The key today I think was my serving. Like I won a lot points on my serve. I think I served smart and mixed it up. I think I served like some key serves out wide to his backhand. Like I think I served more aces than I usually do.

So I think that was the key. I felt like I was playing very solid from the baseline. I should have closed it in the second set, but I think the lack of wins recently -- you know, I've been playing well, but I wouldn't be able to close matches. Lost a lot of tight matches.

That obviously doesn't help in the big moments, but I was able to, you know, hold myself together and I kept fighting. You know, I got one of my best wins in my career. I'm just excited.

Q. Sometimes when you lose a second set tiebreaker like that it can be hard to get

back any momentum. How worried about that were you going into the third set?

IGOR KUNITSYN: Of course you're worried about it. I was two points away from the match. I guess there's nothing you can do. I was able to sort of forget it and, you know, kind of start the match over. I knew just one set to go. It's not a long match. It's just one set.

So it was a one-set match, and I knew I just had to win one set. That was my mindset. I started really well, but lost a really bad game at 3-1. I was 40-Love up on my serve and I lost it, and he turned the match around.

Then I had another 15-40 at 4-3. Lost that game, and almost lost the following game, but held it and broke him.

So there was a lot of swings, you know, like up and down in this match. I was happy I was a bit more lucky maybe and I'm here as a winner.

Q. You mentioned it being one of your biggest victories. What were you thinking immediately when you saw his backhand go wide on match point?

IGOR KUNITSYN: Nothing. Just relief, because it's such a tough conditions. Like it's really physical out here, you know. Every point it's tough to breathe, you know. Your legs get really heavy. You're sweating.

I think I went through like four shirts and I changed shorts, socks. You know, just one of the most difficult conditions to play. You know, it's not much fun out there. You're obviously enjoying playing top guys, enjoying competing, but physically, it's not fun being out there.

Just it was a huge relief. It was such a battle. It's over and I won it, so I think the relief is the right word.

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