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Sony Ericsson Championships Madrid, Spain

K. CLIJSTERS/S. Kuznetsova

6-1, 6-2

An Interview with:

KIM CLIJSTERS

Q. You even made us thought about the old times of Steffi Graf. I mean (inaudible) is also a great player, but it was really perfection tonight.

SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA: Thank you. That's a very nice compliment. Like I said, I really felt like I had to play well today, and I think also you know with having a little bit of pressure of winning, having to win my match today to get through, to have a chance to get through, I think that's another thing that really motivated me a lot and to have had some tough match against Svetlana, I've lost to her before. So I was really ready to go out from there after the first shot, and I was seeing the ball a lot better than I was yesterday.

She's also a different type of player than Maria is. When she hits the balls, she sets them up nicely, a little bit higher so I can always step into the court a little bit. So that was a lot easier I think today.

Q. Kim, congratulations. You played a great match. But it's already midnight here and you're having another match tomorrow. Do you think it's a disadvantage that you had to play a late match and considering the fact that Dementieva had a day off today?

SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA: No, I've always been -- I always prefer to have my matches in a row. I don't like to have a day off in between. So I think in that case yeah it's a little bit of a different schedule I think than what we're used to in normal tournaments because it's very late here.

But I play third again tomorrow so it's not that I have to be here for the first game. And still you have time to sleep in. I mean the matches only start at six so you have enough time to

recover and sleep in. So I feel like I can get enough rest.

Q. Nadia Petrova and (inaudible) complained of the cruel schedule but you don't have a problem?

SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA: No, there's eight players and you, I mean everybody is going to have some, like a schedule that's not going to suit them, there's going to be a match like wish it was a little bit later or I had a day off today. But that happens. And so I think we all have to be professional enough to know that it's not just for one player.

We have to be prepared to play whenever we have to.

Q. Given that you've missed three months because of injury, is it quite important for you to finish the year among the top four or even in the final, just to set a statement for next year to show that you do belong in the top four?

SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA: Well, I don't really look at it in that way. I just think for me personally I think it's nice to be able to play against these girls and to beat someone like today I think that was for me personally that's very important, because just before I had my injury, I started to feel a lot more comfortable out on the court again. I was really playing a lot better.

I played some good matches at the American Hartford tournament, but that's what was frustrating to miss that, to miss those important tournaments for me. And that's why again I was very lucky to make it into the championships, obviously. And then now to play like today, I think in the way I did is a lot more, just gives me a lot more satisfaction, I think, than making the finals.

To me I just take it one step at a time.

Q. Just a question about Amelie Mauresmo, we already know she won't be the number one at the end of the year, at the end of the season. But she won two Grand Slams this year. I just want to know, do you think she changed this year? Is she a different player than maybe two, five years ago?

SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA: Yeah, not

just this year. I think towards the end of last year I think she started to play with a lot more confidence, too, and she started to you know where in the past I think she could maybe miss some shots like some backhands, some easy mistakes. She could get a little nervous when it was getting close but now these days, she's very confident out there.

She moves very well. She looks very fit to me. She's always been a fit player but she looks fitter than she was.

I think she's also a player that needs matches. So I think I don't think she's shown some of her best tennis I think if she gets a few more matches she's definitely, like you said she's won two Grand Slams, so she's definitely been one of the best players so far this year.

Q. Obviously you respect the other seven players, but when you're playing your best, do you fear any of them?

SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA: No, you never do. You never fear your opponent. My attitude when I start the game is you just focus on yourself and, yeah, I mean you play good players. I think maybe the only time when I feared a player was when I actually played Steffi Graf when I played Wimbledon when I made it to the fourth or fifth round there. That was probably the only time where I feared, where I was hoping oh I hope I can get a game out there. That's probably the only time I feared an opponent.

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