

**November 11, 2006**

## **Sony Ericsson Championships Madrid, Spain**

**J. HENIN-HARDENNE/M. Sharapova**

6-2, 7-6

An Interview with:

### **MARIA SHARAPOVA**

MODERATOR: This is an interview of Maria Sharapova.

**Q. What is your next target, please?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: My next target? To have a wonderful vacation. And forget about tennis. At the moment, that's my next target.

As for next year, you know, I'll be doing work in the off season. Hopefully I'll be injury free, I'll be able to improve the things in my game and come out strong from the beginning next year.

**Q. And you dressed like the color of the court. Why is that?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I had no idea what the color of the court was going to be. We designed that dress a year ago. So you know, it's coincidental.

**Q. I would like to ask for your best shout for my program, your best shout. When you're playing, you shout?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: You want me to shout? Are you kidding me? I don't think so. Sorry. I won't shout.

**Q. Did you have something wrong and did you have problems yourself?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I just, I just didn't feel like myself today. I felt a little sluggish. I didn't feel like I was concentrating, and you know when you step on the line and you don't feel like -- like you're not quite there, you're just trying to find a way to figure out, you know, how to get yourself going.

And I tried. I mean from 5-3, I try to find a way, and little by little. Of course, there are going to be days when you're not playing your best. And obviously today was one of them.

But you hope that there's a way to find a way to sort of break through that. And I did feel

like I was getting better towards the end of the match, but I still don't feel like my concentration was quite there. Like I could put two, three points together. And against someone like Justine, that's not good.

**Q. Maria, from the three previous matches, what changed on your way of playing, on the way you faced this game?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I don't know. It's hard to say. I was playing really good solid tennis and today I just felt a little flat. And like I said, I wasn't concentrating as well as concentrating on my previous matches.

When you play nonstop play, you really don't have a choice. If you don't, you end up being the loser on that day.

**Q. It was the semifinal, it gives you any negative opinion of the week here in Madrid for you or leaving happy for how you did?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I've had an amazing year. I've had a very successful year. I don't know what I'll be, two or three in the world, but it's probably the highest I finished in my career, the previous years have been number four. So, yeah, it's -- I mean when you lose it's always disappointing. You think about what you could do, this or that. But at the end of the day, I've got a month and a half off, I'm happy with the way I've been playing lately, and I just hope that I can improve and take that into next year, which is very important.

**Q. Did she surprise you by coming right at you in the first game? She was at the net for the first three, four points.**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: No, with the good conditions here, you've got to expect it.

When she is serving, her serve is pretty big and it's accurate, and she does come to the net a lot, even from the baseline. She takes a lot of balls early and comes in.

No, no, I wasn't really surprised.

**Q. You told us about the future and you have to improve, two questions, one, you talked before with your team about next season, what are your targets for the next season?**

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MARIA SHARAPOVA: What are my titles?

**Q. Targets, your goals for the next season and what do you think you have to improve?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Improvement-wise, I think I've got to come in a little bit more. I've got to work on my net game. I've got to take the opportunities to come in and look for the short balls a little bit more. But that's one of the things you start doing better as you play more matches, because you do it all the time in practice but then you go out in a match you sort of hesitate.

I'm doing it better. I'm seeing the short balls a lot quicker, but that's something that I really can improve. And also get a little bit stronger, you know, definitely be working physically in the off season. But also playing a lot of tennis. That's what I lacked at the beginning of this year. I barely played last year in the off season.

I didn't have any practice time. I spent very -- no amount of time on the tennis court. If I had a choice of being on the court or in the gym I'd rather play tennis than be in the gym because that's what's really going to help you.

Target-wise, you know, of course I'm looking forward to the next big one, which is the Australian Open, but it's so hard to say what a couple of months so far away. So, yeah, that's the next big one.

**Q. Maria, just your serve today, you've been hitting so well, consistently throughout this whole streak. Was there anything in particular that was making it break down today or just-- would you just say it's an off day that people have once in a while?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yes, I think physically obviously I was a little bit fatigued. I didn't feel like I was pushing my legs up into the court. I was probably jumping backwards a couple of steps rather than in the court.

And I wasn't getting -- I wasn't going on the court. I wasn't putting any weight into it. But I can just sit here and tell you all about it, but, you know, sometimes you don't even feel like you're serving well and you have a higher percentage of serves than you actually think.

Today is just the other way around. It's just one of those days.

**Q. How disappointing is it to not finish the year number one, both you and**

**Justine had it within your control to actually finish the year number one, how does that feel?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Disappointing. I've said this, I'm not going to be disappointed, disappointed because you lost the match. The only disappointment I have is from the match not because I didn't become number one.

**Q. Do you think she's deserving of number one, Justine?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yes. She's been in the finals as well as the Grand Slams this year. She's been very consistent. Yes. Like I said the wins take care of the rankings and they don't lie.

**Q. Must feel really good going into next year. Obviously been really the best player the last few months on the tour, more consistent, very, very high level. How does that make you feel going into the 2007 season?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: Yes, I'm really excited. I hope that I take the next month and a half and use that time to my advantage. And, most importantly, don't visit the physio's office, that's going to be an important key factor.

**Q. Did you feel fatigue from the beginning of the day or just during the match?**

MARIA SHARAPOVA: I'm not going to be here and talk about all the excuses that I can come up with, because probably there are many that I can just start babbling on about.

But, yes, of course I mean she played a three set yesterday. She played a little earlier than me but she was on the court longer than I was. So technically, but of course she was injured so she didn't play the last few tournaments.

There are so many scenarios that can go into the possibility of why I lost today. But I don't really think it's really the key answer to the loss.

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