

**November 7, 2006**

**Sony Ericsson Championships  
Madrid, Spain**

M. SHARAPOVA/E. Dementieva

6-1, 6-4

An interview with:

**MARIA SHARAPOVA**

MODERATOR: If we could start with questions for Maria in English.

Q. Hi Maria.

A. Hello.

Q. You are in a very good moment. Do you think that your tennis is good enough during this championship?

A. Can you repeat it? Sorry. I didn't understand the question.

Q. Is my tennis getting better? Is it going to get better? Well, I hope it's going to get better because it's definitely only going to get tougher from here. I don't expect it to get any easier, you know, but, yeah, I hope with every match I improve and I get better.

Q. Are you worried that people talk about your body and don't talk about your tennis?

A. Well, I mean not necessarily. I think that I have to do my job and I can't really be worried about what people think. I don't think I can control their opinions or their thoughts. And you know

I think that's the least of my worries. My job is to go out on the court and do my best, win or lose, and whatever people outside that want to talk about or say, I think that's their own opinion.

Q. Last question. Do you have something to do tonight?

A. Today? Yes. Sleep.

Q. I understand that you, when you came here in May, were part of the casting for the Ball Boys, the modelers, the Ball Boys, how do you think they did tonight?

A. A little rusty at times. But, you know, it's their first match, so you can't really expect, can't really expect them to be on top of their game, just like me. But no, I thought they did well. I mean for people that never do it, it's the first time, I think they did pretty well.

Q. A tennis question.

A. Good.

Q. You had great strength tonight, you're on a great streak at the moment with Zurich and Linns (phonetic), what's the difference, what's really working for you?

A. Number one, I'm healthy, and I'm going on court. I'm not thinking about any injuries or protecting something or, you know, my foot is still not perfect, the one I injured in Moscow. But it's nothing major right now. And you know I'm able to keep it under control.

But the fact that

I've been able to play matches and I'm going, being in different situations and you know when you play matches, you start, you know, you feel your game out on the court. And I've said this many times, I think you can practice as much as you want, but it's never the same as going out and competing and playing in a stadium in a crowd.

Q. Maria, how are you feeling after the first match, how do you see yourself on the court?

A. I mean, it's difficult. I think I played a pretty solid first set. And towards the end of the second set I thought I should have come in a little bit more, put some pressure on her. But I let her get back in the points a little more, and that made the points really long. And she's physically pretty strong, and she's at her best when she runs side to side and makes you hit another ball.

So starting the second set I should have capitalized a little more on the short balls and come in a little bit. But I think, you know, hopefully I'll improve that, I'll definitely need to.

Q. After that first victory now, round-robin competition, maybe you can face the second match in a quiet situation, because maybe you're not as (inaudible)?

A. Well, you know, the first match is always difficult no matter how good you've been playing in the past or how good you feel, just because you're in a new environment, new city, everything is different. The circumstances is different.

And so going into the first round it's never really easy.

So, yeah, I hope I can learn a few things from today and just move and get better from here.

Q. So if you were to assess your level tonight, how would you assess it?

A. My what?

Q. Your level.

A. How would I assess my level? Like I said, I don't think I expected myself to play my best tennis today, just because everything being a little new and Dementieva is a tricky opponent. Never know what to expect. She can hit some really big deep shots and sometimes she makes quite a few errors. So it's just, I don't know, you've got to kind of see how it goes, and I mean I definitely don't think I played my best tennis. I think I played better in the first set than the second.

Q. She was the last player to beat you before this streak began and she mentioned your serving was better and things going on in your game, things that have changed since you last time played her?

A. Is that what she said?

Q. Yeah.

A. I guess, the last time I played her it was in Los Angeles, and I think it was my eighth or ninth match in a row playing, and I felt really fatigued at that point, and I, I don't know, I was just going for all my shots and trying to go for winners and see how it goes because I physically could just not get through that point.

But I still had chances in the match. So but

I don't really remember how I served really.

Q. And just looking ahead to Kim tomorrow, you obviously had trouble with her the first four times you played. In San Diego, can you talk a little bit about that matchup and her game, she's actually coming back after an injury as well?

A. Yes, I think it was important for me to finally get a win against her in San Diego. I think that will definitely help me with the future knowing that I was able to find some sort of way and beat her.

It's also good to see her back after not playing and seeing her injury come back not seeing her for a couple of months. I mean, yes, she won a title last week. She's played the matches. And, yes, I'm looking forward to it. Again, it's not going to be easy but you can't really expect an easy match here.

Q. Maria, how do you compare the atmosphere and the way you've been received here to Los Angeles?

A. I think the stadium in Los Angeles was much spread out and, you know, even if there was the same amount of people you didn't really feel it because you would see empty seats and just felt like your occupation (phonetic) was a lot bigger and the stadium is more enclosed, you feel the fans are closer to you, and really into it, which is great to see.

Q. Do you like the color of the court?

A. Yes, I don't mind it, I guess, yeah. My dress matches it. Coincidental.

Q. First of all congratulations, it was a great match, and a question, are you happy?

A. Am I happy?

Q. I think you don't demonstrate all the happy you are.

A. Excuse me?

Q. I think you act like really quiet. And I have never won a match, and I suppose if I win one, this one or another, I would be happy.

A. If I win the tournament, I'll be happy. I'm concentrating on my job. I just won my first round and I have many to go. That doesn't mean I'm sad or anything.

Q. Maybe it's personality, you know, we're more fun (Spanish)?

A. Easy going? You see, my Spanish is better than your English.

Q. I'm from Valencia. I know you went there and I know like. It's true?

A. It's true, I love Spanish food.

Q. I have agreed, would like to be your ball boy. So can you throw this ball for me? Just --

A. That's not a question. That's an action.

Q. Thank you very much.