

Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships

Monday, February 20, 2017

Catherine Bellis

Press Conference

C. BELLIS/Y. Putintseva

6-1, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. That was a bit of a challenge.

CATHERINE BELLIS: Definitely. I got myself in a bit of trouble in the second set, but I'm glad I got out of it. I just thought to myself, stick to my game plan, just keep steady, I can come back.

I can come back against anyone I set my mind to. I'm really glad I got through it.

Q. Can you talk about that second set a little bit? You lost five straight games and reeled off six. What was that battle like?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Well, in the beginning of the second, I think I won the first game. The second game was really long.

So I just kept thinking to myself, I'm still in this match, obviously even when I was losing, still in this match, and I'm playing well, so I can come back whenever I want and whenever, you know, I get a good rhythm.

So once I went down, I just stayed calm and stuck to my game plan and came back.

Q. Is that something you have always been good at? A lot of players just figure it's gone at that point.

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah, I think some players, when they are up by a lot like that, they relax a little bit, so I think that's a good time that you can take advantage of, like, a little bit of a level drop from them.

Yeah, it was good. I thought about that a little bit in the second set.

Q. What was your injury?

CATHERINE BELLIS: I strained my hamstring and my glute. I had two different strains, actually.

Q. The delay at the start of the season, was that all injury-related?



CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah, yeah, yeah. All injury-related.

Q. The courts here, everybody has been saying they play a bit fast.

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah.

Q. That must kind of play into your hands a little bit? You're used to those quick courts down in Palo Alto?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, I think they play a little fast. I don't think they're too fast, but the other day they had a dust storm and it was so fast. It was crazy.

But, yeah, I like the courts here a lot. They play to my game really well, I think.

Q. How is it different from the juniors? Because you could still be a junior. Being out here on the regular tour, how do you feel you kind of fit in?

CATHERINE BELLIS: I'm still trying to fit in a little bit, I think, but I think it will come eventually with age and experience. But I think it's going well.

Q. What do you mean? Just to the whole atmosphere?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah, the atmosphere.

Q. With the girls?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah, both, a little bit. Yeah, they are a little bit older. Once more of my age group starts coming in, I think it will be a little more comfortable.

Q. Is it sometimes lonely?

CATHERINE BELLIS: I know a few people, so I'm fine with that. I just don't know everyone like I did in the juniors.

Q. What's your traveling team like?

CATHERINE BELLIS: My traveling team?

Q. Yeah.

CATHERINE BELLIS: My coach and my hitting partner that hit with me.

Q. That's all?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah. And sometimes my

parents, too.

Q. You gave up your Stanford scholarship last year?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah.

Q. Are you happy with how things have gone?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah, I'm really happy. I think it was definitely the right decision. Even if it hadn't gone as well as it had last year, I think that still would have been the right decision for me and for my tennis just as a growing player.

Q. Is there any part of you that said, Gee, it would have fun to be in college?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Oh, yeah, for sure. I think that's always -- there is always going to be times when I think of that. But for my future, I think this was the best decision.

Q. Do you have friends who are in college?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah, or that are going to college, yeah, visiting, going to college this year.

Q. Did you get to keep the \$140,000 from the US Open?

CATHERINE BELLIS: I did, yeah.

Q. Did you watch the Australian Open final?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah, of course.

Q. What do you think?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Oh, it was amazing. I think both finals, men's and women's, were inspiring. It brought back, like, 10 years ago what a final would be. I thought that was really cool.

Players like Venus and Serena who are still so amazing at their ages are a real an inspiration.

Q. What were the nerves like or the emotions like, taking the court for your first main-draw match of the season, playing a player who's playing pretty well, made the St. Petersburg final? Did this feel like a regular match, or was there a little bit of extra jitters?

CATHERINE BELLIS: So I played Qatar last week, so at least I had a few quallies and matches under my belt. Yeah, I think it was a little bit nerve-wracking just in certain parts of it, because I'm still, you know, getting used to matches again and getting back into the season.

But I think it went well. I didn't feel too rusty, if you would say that.

Q. How does it make you feel to be able to get, you

know, a quality win at a big tournament against a good player like that?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Oh, it feels great. It feels really, really good, and I'm really happy about that. It gives me a lot of confidence.

Q. Is there a part of you that thinks it's all surreal? You're 17, you travel with a team. It's not like how most 17-year-olds...

CATHERINE BELLIS: Yeah, I watched all the players, Venus, Serena, Sharapova, everyone like that when I was younger, traveling with a team on the pro tour, I mean, when I was 10 years old watching them on TV. It's crazy for me now doing that. It's so fun. I'm so lucky to be able to do what I do.

Q. Where are you based these days? Any coaching or team changes at all in the offseason?

CATHERINE BELLIS: In Orlando. I have the same coach from the USTA, and a guy that's been hitting with me for two years.

Q. Who is that?

CATHERINE BELLIS: Him (pointing to back of the room). Or three years, sorry.