

Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships

Tuesday, February 21, 2017

Kristina Mladenovic

Press Conference

K. MLADENOVIC/K. Pliskova

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You're determined to be known for your singles as well as your doubles, aren't you?

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Yes.

Q. Very good year in singles. Tell us about the match. What are your thoughts on the match tonight?

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Well, you know, first of all, I think it's never easy, never easy to play against each other. We know each other really well. We always had tough matches. So I was already mentally, you know, to stay out there very long to fight.

You know, I think the match was -- it looked maybe easy with the scoreboard, but it was definitely difficult, like, pressure-wise, because I could feel Karolina probably needed some time to adjust, you know, her shots, her rhythm from coming from Doha where it's completely different conditions. I know that.

But in the same time, you know, she has obviously confidence from the beginning of the season and having also that win last week.

So it's tricky, because from one side you can see that here and there, if you fight, if you stay very solid, she can give you some unforced errors she wouldn't give normally, but in the same time, I could feel that she was fighting from the first point to adjust as fast as possible.

We could see in the second set, I mean, it's one point from being at 5-All, and then it's another match. It's totally different. You never know what can happen.

But I think the main thing, the key of the match today for me was I was very aggressive from the beginning on her serve, I mean, on my returns. We know each other really well, and I was trying to put pressure on the return and be very aggressive. We could see that she double faults a couple of times from the first game.



And, yeah, I just took advantage of her low percentage of first serve. I think I was lucky with that, that she was not totally in the rhythm with her serve, and then, yeah, I just tried to be very aggressive and hold pretty good my serves afterwards.

Q. Very tough to finish it off, though, isn't it?

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Yeah, sure. As I said, you know, she hits big. It's going very fast out there, especially -- you know, it's also my first match kind of in a night session. So it's not easy. It's also different from day session when we practice and when I had my first round.

And like I told you, she was coming back. She definitely wanted to be there and to win, and I could feel the pressure. I mean, the last game I was serving quite well, and she returns couple of first serves very deep. Then we went through the rallies, and I had to, you know, to defend some break points.

Kind of not lucky there, but I have to say I was very inspired with some variation. I was, like, Jesus, she got into the rhythm. I've got to try and change something.

I guess credit to me for coming with some slices and dropshots. But that's what my game is about. Sometimes my game is successful; sometimes it's not. I think it's part of the game.

Yeah, I'm very glad, actually, today I was very solid on every single, you know, chances I had, and that's what made the difference.

Q. How comfortable is it now for you playing in Dubai? Does it feel like you're playing at home?

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Yeah, I mean, it feels so great. You know, I had to skip Doha. I thought it was smart. I mean, it's not that it was smart. I was, like, okay, I'm going to do this. Like this, I'm going to stay one week at home before that.

And then when I was here and I was seeing the weather in Doha, I was, like, that was a smart choice. I was enjoying home, my apartment. I'm at the Marina. It felt great. You know, after a very busy beginning of the season with back-to-back St. Petersburg and the Fed Cup, was kind of cold and indoor. And when I first landed, you know, at the beginning of the last week,

yeah, I was feeling definitely at home.

The only thing that is not really -- I mean, is that during the tournament, I'm staying at the hotel, because it's more convenient, because still, you know, I have to go 20, 30 minutes back and forth from the apartment, because the site is not that close.

But, yeah, otherwise I love it here and also have great memories from the past results. It feels great.

Q. How many years have you had the apartment here?

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Three years now. Yeah.

Q. Roger Federer has said he prefers to stay at the hotel during the tournament, even though he could stay at home.

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Does he also stay at the hotel?

Q. Otherwise he doesn't feel as if he's into the tournament.

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Yeah, I have same opinion. That's why I'm staying here. You have more time to rest, and it's like one minute to go to the gym and then practice, you know. I mean, it's very convenient.

Yeah, Roger, it's almost a neighbor. His residence is not that far from mine.

Q. What was Fed Cup like Yannick and Mary?

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: It was fun. It was, for sure, something new and different. But a lot to learn.

You know, I think our team is great. I mean, we have quite a lot of people in the team. I would say our coach is really involved in all the, you know, the stats, the technique, the tactic part of the game. And then we have Mary, Mary Pierce. She's super nice and knows tennis really well. She gives advices here and there. Doesn't talk too much, because she doesn't want us to have from the first week like everybody talking to us.

But I always been in touch with Mary somehow. She says sometimes I remind her of being on the court, which is very nice. We have great communication.

And Yannick is totally something different. You know, he's -- how to say that in English? He's kind of someone that will take his team to the war, like he's very just mental, this energy, this experience, like this spirit, you know. We don't talk necessarily that much about tennis, but it's more like, you know, the spirit, his stories, the little details.

Like he tried to put us already in a situation like he lived

in the past so we learn faster, you know. We don't, like, fail. You know what I mean.

It's very nice. There is lots of new information, so it's a very enriching.

Q. My French is not great, but I have read through translations some things you said about, or maybe they were interpreted as saying about Caroline in Fed Cup and that you were maybe mad at her that she didn't play, and --

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Just to clarify that thing, I never mentioned her name, and it was not about her. I just answered the question that it was about the missing players in the team, and I was not mentioning Caroline Garcia.

I was comparing -- I was just simply comparing Amandine Hesse with Oceane Dodin, who is also an upcoming talented young player, and she never played for Fed Cup. She had one tie with us and never gave her all, and, you know, build something in the team.

And I was comparing with Amandine that was literally like crying, being in the team. She came with us, being a hitting partner, which I thought was horrible for her. And then she earned her spot being the main fourth player and then ended with playing official match. I could see how pride she has, because for us, in France, it's something big to big patriotic and play for the country.

So I was definitely not using that strong words towards my partner, because, you know, it's a choice of hers not to play this year. I regret it. I cannot say I agree with that, but in the past, from the beginning, from the beginning of her career, she always played full. And when she played, I mean, you could see what we have done together in the past.

So then unfortunately, as you know, journalists are playing -- I mean, they are turning it around, the words. And then, yeah, the same evening, (indiscernible) was like a mess, like Mladenovic would attack Garcia.

So I feel very bad about it, because, you know, like the entire week with the journalists, I had obviously questions about Caroline. I thought that was clear enough about my opinion about her not being here. So during that press conference, I didn't say Caroline or Oceane Dodin. And, yeah, it all kind of...

Q. Did you have to immediately text Caroline?

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: I straightaway texted her, but she was in Doha and I didn't want to have to explain to her everything over the phone.

She's like, Okay, I'm going to see. And obviously she went to see the press conference, the video, and she was surprised. She was also kind of disappointed and sad because she thought that I could say that.

And then, I mean, she was in the tournament. I was like, Listen, stay focused and play your tournament, and then we're gonna see each other in Dubai. I will explain you this.

We had a talk here, and I explain her that what a surprise, like the entire week was not like one article bad about her, I mean, me talking bad about her, and it was only good things.

And I was, like, what a surprise, like the entire week obviously I have questions about her and there is not one article, not one video posted. How is that possible? And then on Sunday afternoon, the press kind of, you know -- I mean, yeah.

So, yeah, of course she didn't like it. Me, neither. We don't like that kind of situation, but what can we do? Next time either I will speak less or be, I don't know...

Q. Going back to that break point that you saved with the slice and the dropshot, is that one of those shots that every coach would probably tell you never, ever do that? Like you said, if you miss one of those shots, it's 5-All. Talk through the decision to play that, and if it wasn't a decision...

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Yeah. It's very funny. I mean, you saying just out loud what I was thinking when I won that point. I was like, whew. We had that conversation, where was that, after St. Petersburg, and, I mean, it's difficult to explain.

When the ball is coming to me, I'm also in a bad situation. The ball was quite low and fast, and then you have like not even a second to decide what shot you're gonna play.

For sure, when I was with the coach, I would go basics, you know, like I'll probably rally that shot crosscourt or down the line. I'd probably rally. And don't ask me why I choose that shot. I could miss it, you know. I could miss it and fail, and that would look terrible. It would look like, oh, she's tight and she tried from nowhere a slice, it cannot work.

I will probably miss that one in couple matches. I cannot say it's the right shot to do all the time, and it's not gonna be successful every time. But sometimes it is, and it probably today saved me from that situation. I would play a more basic shot -- Karo was, I think, ready to kill it the next ball, because there was no chance I could play basic, like, deep groundstrokes from that

ball to kind of put me again in a great position.

So it's definitely a shot I think that today I managed to do, because my head is free, and, you know, I was not doing that shot, Okay, do I go what we worked like the entire week going, like, average and consistency, like, groundstrokes from the baseline, or do I just try what I feel?

So I'm not saying it's right. I will probably miss couple of those in the future. That's for sure, I can guarantee. But hopefully I can make some, as well. That's me.