

Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships

Monday, February 20, 2017

Monica Puig

Press Conference

M. PUIG/Y. Shvedova

6-3, 4-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. It's good when you have to fight that hard to get a win?

MONICA PUIG: Yeah, especially in the first round I think it's good to have a match that pushes you a little bit, so then you start getting into the rhythm. You know, she's a very tricky opponent and I have played her several times. You really have to be on your toes in every point in the match. I'm just happy that I got through today.

Q. Did you have an injury?

MONICA PUIG: Just some lower back soreness. I came from Doha two days ago, so the balls are a bit different. The court is definitely much different than in Doha, and obviously there is no rain here (smiling).

It's just something that I have to go and get treatment with, but it's really no big deal.

Q. Talking about the condition change from Doha to here in terms of the ball speed and the court conditions, setting aside the rain, how different is it playing in Dubai?

MONICA PUIG: Well, it is different. The court, I feel, is a little bit faster. The ball, for me, it feels a little bit bigger and it bounces a lot more.

I was told that there is a bit of altitude here. You know, definitely goes through the court a lot quicker and it flies a lot more. That's just something you need to adjust to. Even though it's not your best day, you just have to learn how to cope with the circumstances and adjust accordingly.

Q. You're six months out of your biggest moment, I think. What kind of perspective have you put on the gold medal?

MONICA PUIG: Yeah, well, I'm just trying to leave that in the past and when I have some free time try and reflect on it a little bit, but just trying to focus now on the present and what I have to do now to get better,



you know, and take each match as a learning experience. You know, go back with my coach after every match and figure out what I did right, what I did wrong, what we have to work on.

Definitely trying to see this, you know, these next few months as a learning process to grow and to understand a little bit better what I have to do.

So far I think, you know, I have been doing a great job since last week. I'm just hoping to continue this way.

Q. Do you feel there is a pressure for you to perform and whatever because of that? And also, where is the medal?

MONICA PUIG: Well, you know, there is a bit of pressure, but that's something I have to learn to cope with. You know, I'm doing the best I can at this moment to deal with it all.

I'm thinking my team and I are doing just such a great job on staying focused on what I have to accomplish and staying focused on staying in the present.

You know, the Olympics happened. It was great, but I'm hungry for more success. I think the way to do that is just to take it day by day and see where that takes me.

And the medal is home in a safe place. You know, it's always nice to reflect on that and just know that it wasn't a dream.

Q. Is it on display, or is it in...

MONICA PUIG: It's not on display yet, you know, but I like to look at it a lot. It gives me goosebumps. It was such a beautiful moment for me. It's always nice to go back and remember.

Q. It must give you confidence, like a sense you belong, a moment where you must feel now you belong amongst the top players. Is that true?

MONICA PUIG: You know, it was a great week for me in Rio, and it was really good, but the fact of the matter is I didn't back it up afterward.

So, you know, right now I'm just trying to get back to feeling comfortable, playing at that level consistently. And, you know, right now I'm doing a great job, I think.

I'm working really hard.

You know, I'm giving my 100% in tennis, and I'm just focused on this right now. This is consuming my whole life.

I just really want this really bad. So I'm going to do whatever it takes. If that's training more, if that's, you know, fixing the little things, it doesn't matter for me. I really love what I do and I really love playing tennis. I'm just going to work really hard to accomplish some more of my dreams.

Q. Does it change targets and dreams for this year, a dawning moment, a realization you can do more?

MONICA PUIG: Well, you know, I do have my goals and I have them set, but right now I think the biggest thing is focusing on the process, because if I get too result-oriented, then I lose sight of what's important. And right now what's important is to continue to grow as a tennis player and as a person.

I feel like, you know, maturity is something that I have to work on and that I'm going to continue to work on. I'm in no rush to get anywhere. I proved that to myself that anything great can happen at any time. I just have to work really hard to get there.

Q. Have you learned the Puerto Rican National Anthem yet?

MONICA PUIG: Yes, I do know it. I do know it. But I think if a moment like that comes again, I'm going to forget every single word and I'm just going to start bawling. I have heard it several times since, especially in the exhibition, the Monica Puig Invitational that I had.

I promised myself that I wasn't going to cry. I was, like, I'm not going to cry, I'm not going to cry, and I started crying mid-anthem. I was, like, No. I was, like, I have to play a match. I can't be crying.

But it's just so beautiful, and I'm really proud to be Puerto Rican. I think as my career goes on I'm just going to continue to represent them as best I can and hopefully represent them in the Olympics in 2020.

Q. Getting to the boring question of the tennis, it does seem that you're starting to get traction in terms of your game compared to where it was in January. What have you seen as the oncourt development? What do you think you're doing better now in the last couple of weeks compared to the start of the season?

MONICA PUIG: I think post-Australian Open was a really big change for me, because I really just buckled down and I said, Look, this can go one of two ways: It can go really bad or it can go really well. I'm just going

to work as hard as I can. If I lose, at least I know that I'm doing everything in my power to come out and win. And then I go back to the drawing board and just fix it.

If I win, you know, I'm going to take that as a good thing, but obviously go back, like now with my coach, and say, What did I do wrong? What should we fix? Let's go to the practice court if we have to.

Right now that's on my mind is just, you know, trying to become the best I can be, and I know that the only way to do that is by working. You know, I don't mind staying on the tennis court a little while longer.

Q. Post-Australian Open, what was different in terms -- did you have a training block?

MONICA PUIG: Yeah, I had, like -- I don't know when I got back from Australia, but since I got back I had four days off, and then I just was training in Boca with my coach. Just really working as hard as I could, you know, on court, putting in more hours, you know, playing a lot more practice sets and things like that and just putting myself in those uncomfortable situations, because I know the more uncomfortable I get, the more I will learn.

And the more those uncomfortable situations come along, I will be able to handle them a lot better, like serving out the match today. That was pretty uncomfortable. But I was able to do it because I have been working really hard on just staying in the moment.

So, you know, it will get better.

Q. Does Boca have a different feel now that the USTA is kind of gone?

MONICA PUIG: Yeah, because there are not that many girls to practice with. But I do have Evert, and they have some boys there to practice. Tomljanovic trains there. During the offseason it's really good, because you have Cibulkova, you have Naomi Osaka, you have a lot of girls that you can go and play matches with.

So for me it's fine. It's really quiet. It's a good place to just focus and just work. And I have my apartment there. I have made it home.

You know, for me, I have kind of accepted the fact that Boca is my home and my training place. I really like it now, so that's good.