

BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 11, 2017

Madison Keys

Press Conference

M. KEYS/M. Duque-Marino

6-1, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How did it feel to be out there after being off the court for such a long time?

MADISON KEYS: It felt really good. You know, I really, really missed competing and being able to go out there and get a win on top of it was amazing.

Q. What did it feel like when it wasn't going as amazing today? Is it actually sort of rough?

MADISON KEYS: Yeah, I think so. But I also think, you know, I wanted that first match back to be a win so badly and I was so excited, I think I just kind of got ahead of myself.

Q. Were there things that were being on court that felt surprisingly unfamiliar, or did it just all lock right back in?

MADISON KEYS: It felt -- it would feel like there was a couple of points where it's like, Okay, and I was, like, Oh, that was rusty. So, yeah, I think just kind of finding that rhythm and that groove again is coming back slowly, but, you know, I think I'm kind of figuring it out (smiling).

Q. Have you ever been in this sort of position before where now you have had some time off and now you kind of have to recapture that?

MADISON KEYS: No, I don't think I have had longer than, like, three weeks off since I was four.

Q. So maybe the rest was good?

MADISON KEYS: So different feeling for me.

Q. But how do you handle that, though?

MADISON KEYS: I mean, it wasn't like I really had an option. So it was this is what's happening. How am I going to, you know, do the best that I can with this? I think I did a good job. I got to see a lot of family and kept busy and was able to do rehab and practice as often as I could. You know, I'm just really happy to be back.

Q. Can you talk through just, you know, finding out that you might -- like the injury was an issue, and



then needing to kind of have surgery, and then the rehabilitation process afterwards? Give us some insight into that whole section of time.

MADISON KEYS: Well, I actually injured it at 2015 US Open.

Q. That's a long time ago.

MADISON KEYS: Yeah, it was a long time ago. And, you know, kind of just managed it for a while. And then I think it was after Wimbledon I found out it's not going to go away and that I was going to need surgery to fix it. So the original plan was, Okay, after US Open, get it done, be ready for Australian Open.

And then after US Open, there was the race to Singapore. To me, there is no way you're going to get me off of a tennis court right now. Then it was, okay, we're going to do everything we can to get to Singapore. And then, if you don't make Singapore, we'll call it there. If you do, which I did, I got home, like, like the 30th or the 31st and I had surgery November 2nd.

Q. So the idea of trying to manage it, you're injured, but you don't -- you're trying to put off surgery, what kind of compromises did you have to make in terms of your game and what you do? Were there things that maybe you had done before and now all of a sudden you sort of have to tweak things just to stay on the court?

MADISON KEYS: I don't think I really compromised my game. If anything, it made me play my game better, looking more for forehands, doing what I could, maybe not going for the winner down the line from 16 feet behind the baseline, playing a lot smarter.

More than anything, I think it made me a lot more mentally tougher knowing it's going to hurt, it's going to be tough, but just wanting to make Singapore that badly, I was just going to do everything that I could to get there.

Q. Are you 100% now? Is it close? 90%? 80%?

MADISON KEYS: I would say it's completely healed. It's just getting the strength back, being able to get through multiple matches, things like that. That's where I think it's, you know, 80%. But, you know, again, I haven't been able to play a full match since Singapore.

So, I mean, this week is kind of a good test to see where it is and, you know, hopefully it's perfect and I can just keep building off of it.

Q. You're working with Lindsay again, and I'm wondering, have there been any changes in terms of -- the first time you worked together, she was so busy with her family, she couldn't give you the time you wanted. How is that working out now?

MADISON KEYS: I think we both came to the table knowing what, you know, what I could give, what she could give, all of that. I have been lucky that I have also had the help of USTA in Orlando. So the weeks that she can't do, I have a really good base to go home to and practice there.

So that's been really good. You know, I think we both -- we know what to expect.

Q. What is it about your relationship with Lindsay that makes it work well and for you wanting her back?

MADISON KEYS: I think we're similar in a lot of ways. We understand each other. You know, it's always just so nice to have someone who gets it and understands. You know, even today at 5-4, she came out and said, You're good, you're fine, you know.

And just having that relationship I think is really special.

Q. How tough was it for you to be home during the Australian Open?

MADISON KEYS: It was tough (smiling). Hopefully that doesn't happen again.

You know, Australian Open is one of my favorite places, and just the whole Australia swing.

Missing that was really tough. And to be completely honest, I didn't watch much of it. But more than anything, it just made me want to come back to the court as quick as possible.

Q. Any off-court measures away from tennis?

MADISON KEYS: I was really busy, honestly. I visited some family in Aspen. I was in Hawaii with Lindsay for a bit. I went to Cabo for Thanksgiving. I was kind of all over the place. It was kind of nice to live a normal life for a bit.

Then after about two months, I was, Look, I'm over it. I'm ready to get back to my life.

Q. There is a number of players playing with a gratitude effect. They're away from the game for a bit, coming back, seeing Roger and Venus, seeing

a lot of people. Are you getting anything like that from your time away, your perspective of the game, what it means to you?

MADISON KEYS: For sure. I mean, walking out there today, I almost started crying. It's just so great to be back.

We do get to do what we love. I think that's really special, and I think sometimes we get really caught up in the winning and the losing and rankings and all of that. And at the end of the day, we get to play a sport that we love for our jobs, and just this whole time has made me realize how truly blessed I am to be able to do that.

Q. Can you talk about the next match? Next opponent? Obviously you guys have pretty tricky match in US Open last year. Can you talk about Naomi?

MADISON KEYS: It's going to be a tough match. US Open was obviously a crazy match. She played really well at times. I think I played well at times. She's a big hitter. She goes for her shots. She's a really great player. It's going to be tough. I'm going to have to go and talk to everyone and figure out a good game plan.

Q. Did you feel for her in the stadium, that big stage environment, Ashe Stadium, a new opportunity for her, obviously, and it just starts to slip away? Are you just in the moment trying to come back or do you feel for her?

MADISON KEYS: How do I answer that question without sounding badly. Did I feel for her? Yes. Was I really happy that I won? Yes (smiling).

That was one of those moments where I kind of realized, I'm the more experienced person here. Like, I'm using my experience when that's happened to me.

So, I mean, she's going to learn from that and she's going to do it to someone else one day.

So kind of felt for her, but...

Q. But as a professional, really, that's when -- you see her in tears, you know, this is when you've really got to drive it home and finish, right?

MADISON KEYS: Yeah, that's part of the sport. When you see the other person getting nervous or overwhelmed and things like that, that's when you've gotta focus on yourself and know, you know, you've really got to put the pressure on her. She's feeling it, she's a bit nervous, and you just have to focus on it that much more.

Q. At that point, are you playing yourself more to stay in it rather than your opponent?

MADISON KEYS: I think you can, and I think, in a way, you almost have to remind yourself, she's feeling overwhelmed, don't overplay. Make her play, make her feel the pressure, get the balls back in.

So I think there is a delicate balance between keeping the pressure on and also still going for your shots.

Q. Not to be overly negative, but today, second set...

MADISON KEYS: First match back in four months. Okay. (Smiling).

Q. But in that situation, do you kind of -- are you kind of concerned that, Okay, I'm letting her back into the match, that she's gaining confidence at my expense?

MADISON KEYS: I was just trying to close out the match, to be honest with you.

Q. Have you ever talked to Naomi? Do you read her stuff? Can you see how funny she can be?

MADISON KEYS: I see her tweets and stuff, and it's hilarious. She walks around the locker room, and she's really shy and she's really reserved, and then I will see someone retweet someone, and I'm like, All right. There we go (smiling).

So it's really -- it's really cool to see, you know, that -- I think it just kind of shows that maybe the way that we are around our competitors, or, you know, in this environment, is not always the way that we actually are.

Q. You're kind of wide open, I would think, in the locker room. Have you talked to her much?

MADISON KEYS: I have talked to her a little bit. I have talked to her in Boca when we practiced, and, I mean, me being like the outgoing personality and trying to talk to her. She's like, Okay. I'm like, in her head she's like, She's a total freak.

Q. Were you surprised, then, knowing that you went into last season that you had this wrist issue, that you did what you did last season? Was there ever a point where you're like, Huh, okay.

MADISON KEYS: It kind of hit me, like, more in Asia where it was really kind of starting to bug me and become more painful and all of that. And there were some times when I'd hit a backhand and I'd hit a winner, and I was, like, All right, then. I guess it still works (smiling).