

BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 11, 2017

Venus Williams

Press Conference

V. WILLIAMS/J. Jankovic

1-6, 7-6, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Who was that woman in the first set?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, I mean, credit to Jelena for playing well. Just wasn't able to be my best in that first, but that's why they make two sets.

Q. How much were you struggling with your arm?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, I definitely wasn't able to do everything I wanted to. Took me some time to kind of get my head around that. It was good to get through the match. And I'm not on the schedule tomorrow and just try to get ready for Monday.

Q. Talking about how you were able to turn it around and get that win, is it just a matter of raising your level or were you starting to loosen up a little bit as you kind of got more time on that back court?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think just trying to get focused. You know, you have to get disciplined and just try to, you know, try to just deal with what's at hand and trying to use the tools you have on this particular day.

So I think just wrapping your head around all that was what I was trying to do.

Q. A long, long time ago you beat Dementieva in the quarters and after that you came down into the stadium with your dad and were greeted with some -- an unkind reception. It's been 16 long years since you have scored a win in the desert. I'm sure it was many years of reflection. Could you just talk about that period and what it meant to be away from here and what it means today to have a victory here?

VENUS WILLIAMS: It's wonderful to see how the tournament has developed, which is great for tennis. It's huge. People come from all over the world to be here. It's fan friendly. I love that. I love being a part of that.

What else can I say? The past is the past, but I'm happy that I was able to move forward and everyone



was able to move forward. I had so much support today.

Yeah, it was nice to get a win here after so very long (smiling). It's very rewarding.

Q. Some fans I was talking with were saying how things have really changed over the years. The crowd was chanting, Let's go, Venus. Talk about your part of making change and things transforming.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, Serena came to play here a couple years ago, so that was, of course, the first step. She did so much. I was really proud of her for that. Made it easy for me.

Q. Last year's tournament ended in a bit of a controversy with the remarks of then tournament director Ray Moore made about women and equal prize money. He stepped down shortly after that, but he's still working around here in some capacity around the grounds. Your thoughts on how the tournament handled that and just how they have reset from that over the past year.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah. I mean, the tournament really is a huge supporter of women's tennis and a huge supporter of men's tennis and just tennis in general. The women love playing here.

I was happy that the tournament did stand for equality and low tolerance of inequality. I think sometimes people make mistakes. He probably didn't intend -- you don't wake up in the morning and say that this is going to happen. I don't think that's how he was planning his morning.

So sometimes things happen, and we all should understand that everyone can have a bad day, and we all can just get better.

Q. You're willing to move on, it sounds like?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Oh, God, of course. If I wasn't willing to move on, I wouldn't be back in Indian Wells. It's no good to hang on to things.

Q. Last year you cited your sister as the driving force behind you choosing to come back to this tournament. Can you say anything about your

reaction to her withdrawing?

VENUS WILLIAMS: If she could be here, she would. Trust me. She loves it. She is frustrated when you can't play, especially in the big events. I told her, Hey, enjoy yourself. Get better. Enjoy yourself. Try and enjoy the time you don't have to be running back and forth after a ball.

But it's easier said than done. It's not fun being away.

Q. You were in St. Petersburg for a bit. Did you get a chance to stop and soak it all in, what happened there in Melbourne and what were your takeaways?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Somewhat. I think the biggest takeaway for me was just even more confidence. That's the biggest takeaway. I definitely look forward, like, all right, I want to build on that and continue to play well and to just improve my game, which is what I worked on.

So I'm not necessarily living in the past. It just makes me more excited for the future.

Q. Would you say that pulling out today's match was maybe a legacy of what you achieved in Melbourne?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Legacy? I mean, I definitely walked out there confident that I could compete. Like any match I walk out there, I know that I'm going to really compete and that gives me confidence in itself.

And definitely playing well in Melbourne, I think, was a factor in being able to win today, for sure.

Q. Tommy Haas is tournament director. He's still playing semiactively. What's are your thoughts on that?

VENUS WILLIAMS: He's still playing?

Q. He's entered in Miami, I think.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Oh, I had no idea. That's awesome. He's had a lot of tough injuries, but he always came back and it was just amazing to see him do that.

I think that whatever he puts his mind to, he's probably going to excel.

Q. Do you see yourself being a tournament director?

VENUS WILLIAMS: No, I don't think so.

Q. Why not?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I think I have another job after this, so I'll have my hands full somewhere else. I probably wouldn't be able to give the time and attention that something like this deserves.

Q. Do you think a recent and current player in that sort of role could have a very different take to it?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Oh, of course. They are going to understand what it's like to be a player, and then they are going to understand what it's like from the tournament side. I think we all understand that matrix.

So I think it's a good idea, for sure.

Q. You were born in California. What do you like most about the desert?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I just feel at home in California. Like, when I land, I'm like, All right. I'm home. There is not a lot of places you feel at home. I'm fortunate to have more than one.

Here is very relaxing, so you can, like, play and that's it.

Q. In Australia you spoke about the win for Serena being a win for both of you. Are you communicating with Serena now and is she kind of giving you some push towards doing well here?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Of course. Yeah, said great match. I haven't had a chance to talk to her yet. She's watching.

Q. So positive, but if there was one thing you could change in our sport, could you suggest one thing that tennis might change?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think doubles is very exciting. It's undervalued. I'd love to see doubles be more appreciated and grow. I think it's a commodity, long-term plan. I love watching doubles. It's just -- the exchanges, you can't really recreate that in singles. Perhaps down the road, that would be something that would be something we're looking at.

Q. Nadal says he plays doubles for fun. Is it a lot of fun for you? Does that help you extend your career?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I play doubles for Grand Slam titles, and that's fun (smiling).

Q. If you could play mixed doubles with anyone, who would you choose?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Serena Williams.

Q. Mixed.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Serena Williams (laughter). I'll take my chances.

Q. It's 10 years since you were one of the leaders of women for equal prize money. It came in 2007. What are your reflections on that?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Oh, my gosh. It's a 10-year

anniversary? Bananas. Boy, did time fly. But it's a good reason to celebrate. Maybe the WTA, maybe we should do something for that. I hadn't realized 10 years had gone by.

Q. What do you remember about crossing that finish line?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I don't think anyone thought we were going to get there that fast. I was ready to fight for, like, a number of years and then, all of a sudden, everyone gathered together. Everyone was able to communicate.

The Grand Slams were -- we were able to find a common ground, and it was wonderful to see all the bodies of tennis working together like that. So that was the most surprising part. It was a great thing, though.

Q. Do you have any current battles you feel you're pushing for on any fronts?

VENUS WILLIAMS: My current battle involves me getting closer to No. 1. So that's the biggest battle I'm fighting right now. It's rather selfish perhaps.

Q. Shahar just announced her retirement. You played an incredible role in that situation a long time ago. Could you just talk about that, what your feelings were, why you decided to step forward?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I had no plans to play a role at all, but I just ended up being in that final. And I don't like to, like, not confront stuff that's not happening, and it was happening. Somebody needed to say something.

So it was no plan. It was -- I happened to be in the finals and got to be in a position to say something. It was the right -- it wasn't right. She's an unbelievable competitor, and deserved the right to have an opportunity to represent who she was.

And sport brings people together, so it was sad to see, like, oh, no, that it could be so broken.

Q. Did she talk to you at the time or afterwards?

VENUS WILLIAMS: We never really talked about it. Maybe one day we will. Yeah.

Q. Maria Sharapova is coming back next month to Stuttgart and has gotten a few wildcards already in some tournaments and others are still weighing their decisions. What are your thoughts about that scenario? A big star coming off of something like this, how do you think she will be received?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Doesn't seem to be any precedent for it. I don't really have a particular thought about it. I think the bodies have made their decision, and she has an opportunity to come back and continue her career. I think she should be allowed to continue that. If people

want to give her wildcards, I guess that's the tournaments' decision as they weigh other wildcards.

It will be nice to have her back in the game.

Q. Just going back a few questions when you were talking about -- and I don't wish retirement on you, but you said you'd have another job once playing is done. Is that purely going to be EleVen by Vince Camuto or is it going to be a lot more than that?

VENUS WILLIAMS: It will be just that, and hopefully some time on the couch in my house. That would be new and interesting for me.

It will be interesting to get a life, but while I can still hit the ball rather well, we'll see how that goes. I don't know what's going to happen, but I'm here. That's where I want to be.

Q. What are your favorite couch activities right now? What are you watching?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I never really get to sit on the couch.

Q. No?

VENUS WILLIAMS: No. No, I'm never home. When I am home, every moment is well used, because that moment is going to end. Yeah, me and the couch, we will have a reunion. Yeah.

Q. Can you talk about the next round real quick?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I don't know who I'm playing, but whoever it is, I really hope I play well (smiling).