

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

Sharon Fichman

Press Conference

FICHMAN-OLMOS/Aoyama-Shibahara

4-6, 7-5, 10-5

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Congratulations on an incredible week. Can you just talk about, yeah, just the journey of being alternates and maybe not even playing the event to having one of the tougher doubles draws I have seen for any team en route to a title and navigating that in a bunch of really tight matches, and then obviously now saving championship points to win a WTA 1000 in Rome. Seems pretty cool.

SHARON FICHMAN: Thank you so much. I guess when you put it that way, we probably should buy a lottery ticket tonight (smiling).

Q. There is some magic from the Vatican sprinkling over things maybe?

SHARON FICHMAN: Definitely, definitely. Yeah, I guess it was kind of a fairy tale week in the sense we technically weren't even in the tournament. We were so pumped to get in the draw when we were told that a team had withdrawn and that we'd be able to play.

I think we just rode that momentum and excitement into the first round and just -- you know, we just felt no matter what the situation was, no matter what the score was, we just kept swinging, kept fighting. We knew that we weren't even technically in the tournament, so just go for it, which you're supposed to do anyways.

But we just really did such a good job of working together as a team this week. I thought that in the important moments we really showed what we could do. We were super brave. We had a lot of fun. That was the great part, too, like no matter how stressful the situation was, whenever one of us noticed that the other was getting a little bit too revved up, we would crack a joke or make each other laugh, and I think that really helped.

Yeah, the draws were super tough, but we just took it point



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by point. Had as much possible fun as we could. Here we are.

Q. To win Rome, just really a few weeks since kind of dealing with injuries and things like that for you, I mean, that's got to be quite a glow up, as the kids say, to get a big tournament like this so quickly.

SHARON FICHMAN: Yeah, for sure. You said it. You know, this year has been a tumultuous year for me in that we started the year super strong, making the quarters of the Oz Open, and that was really exciting.

Then I had a really, really unfortunate and pretty serious shoulder tear. That was devastating for sure, to have such a high coming out of Australia and wanting to carry that through. I kind of got halted. Especially during COVID, it's really challenging because I couldn't go home. My fiancé and I were stuck and we had to find a base somewhere and try and do my physio over WhatsApp. It was quite the experience.

But I think in some ways, being able to overcome that in such a challenging time in such a challenging way during a pandemic, I think that really made me build my adversity muscles and maybe feeling like, Wow, if I can do this, then I can handle pretty much almost anything.

We had a lot of fun doing it, and I think that really carried over to competing once I was able to come back. Now I'm just so happy. You know, I'm just so grateful. I really am feeling just an overwhelming amount of gratitude for everything.

Q. It's got to be so worrisome when you have an injury like that and not knowing how quickly it's going to come back, especially after you guys had started so well. Did you feel as though -- first of all, how did it hold up? I mean, seeing it hold up over a very intense seven-day tournament I'm assuming has to feel pretty good for you. But also, do you feel like just on the tournament as a whole there was a match or a moment that things seemed to maybe turn around or click for you and Giu-Giu this week?

SHARON FICHMAN: Yeah, you know, I think that things actually have been clicking over the last few weeks, because this is our third tournament, I believe, that we



... when all is said, we're done.®

have been playing together since I came back.

So I would say like we had some really great moments in Stuttgart, we had some great moments in Madrid, we had some tough, challenging moments, as well, some adversity that we had to go through some unfortunate luck during some of the matches, which happens. That's sports.

And I think we learned some lessons from that so that, you know, I thought that the challenges that we were facing this week, I really thought we did a great job as a team to kind of take those lessons that we learned in the last couple of events and really make sure that we do our best to stick to our plan and not make the same mistake. You know what I mean?

So I'm really proud of us for that. Things that didn't go our way in the last couple of events, we really took things into our own hands, used our brain, didn't play well all the time this week, but we played really smart when we needed to. We raised our level when we needed to.

So I would say that it was like building up not necessarily like an "aha moment" this week. I'd say it was like a buildup from the last couple events and then just kind of rolling with it as the week went on here.

Q. First of all, what does it mean to you personally and in your career to win a WTA 1000 in Rome this week? Also, the crowd support that was out there. You're like Italy's favorite WTA player, I think. That's how vocal they were getting for you out there. Can you talk about both of those things?

SHARON FICHMAN: Yeah, I mean, Rome now I can officially say it's got to be my favorite tournament on the calendar. I mean, it always has been. It's a tournament that, like, growing up I always wanted to play. When I was watching it on TV, it always looked so beautiful.

Last year I came here. Didn't have the greatest event, but I did enjoy it so much, because it's just such a stunning place and such an extraordinary city in one of my favorite countries in the world.

There is no words to explain what it means to me. I'm so grateful, and I'm so proud of myself and my partner and my fiancé. He's been with us all week. I'm so proud of us as a team. We did a great job.

Then the crowd support is so nice to be able to play in front of fans. We haven't been able to get it very often. It's so challenging with COVID, and understandably, you know, everyone has to be very safe and careful, but it was so nice to have -- I know it was not full capacity, but it was so

nice to have some fans out there.

They were just awesome. They made the energy just, oh, just on another level. They gave us that lift we needed and pumped us up when we didn't really feel like getting pumped up.

Yeah, I'm so happy to be able to win this tournament and to do it in front of such a wonderful crowd.

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