

Billie Jean King Cup

Friday, 15 November 2024

Team Great Britain

Captain Anne Keothavong

Katie Boulter

Press Conference

K. BOULTER/L. Siegemund

6-1, 6-2

Team Germany - 0

Team Great Britain - 2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Katie, well done. How pleasing is it to get the win for the team in such kind of comprehensive fashion?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, I mean, every single GB win is an honor. I don't take them for granted. They don't come easily. To get another one under my name, it feels really good.

Obviously I haven't played many indoor matches this year, so it's always a bit of a shock to the system going back inside. I felt like I did well today. It's not easy. She's a tricky opponent. I don't think she was on her best, best form, but at the same time, I think I played some good stuff. That's really encouraging and a great start to the tournament.

Q. You were up so quickly and didn't seem to give her any time to settle into rallies. Was that a deliberate plan?

KATIE BOULTER: That was absolutely deliberate, because I spent four hours watching Sorribes Tormo play against Linette. I was, like, We need to make this quick. I don't care if we win, lose... No, I'm kidding.

I'm really happy with the way I played. I kept my focus the whole time. Honestly, it's hard to stay focused the whole time in those matches, and obviously I'm supposed to win that on paper, but you never know what's going to happen.

So I never take that for granted. You've got to try and win every single point and stay on top as much as possible and



not really give her an in, because those kinds of players can come back if you drop your level for a game or two.

Yeah, really happy with the way that I managed to stay at the same level the whole time today.

Q. Coming in, how did you feel physically? At the end of Hong Kong you said the tank was empty. How topped up is it now, and how do you feel?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, I mean, I took two days off, went to go see my boyfriend which filled the tank up a fair bit, I will say. It's been seven weeks, so that was really nice for me (smiling).

Yeah, no, look, it's been a long season, but I left a lot in the tank for this tournament, and I'm going to be here fighting for every single ball.

I think it's a massive credit to my team. I think not only have I stayed healthy this year, I'm still here feeling good, playing matches no problem at all.

So I think that's something like a testament to how hard I have worked over these last few years, especially. This year has been a massive push, and I have changed my training a little bit where I'm training more through tournaments. It's really paying off now.

Q. Obviously you and Emma are together as the leading two singles players. How did it help, you knowing that she's up first and winning like that? Does that help you sort of playing a bit more freely?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, of course. I have been in that position many times when I was playing with Johanna Konta, and I always wanted to get that first rubber to try to take pressure off the No. 1 player, because ultimately they're playing a No. 1 again. It's always going to be a tough match. You never know which way it's going to go.

She did incredibly well today. Obviously she hasn't played that many matches, so to see that level out there again, just doing really well, it's really nice to see. It's where she belongs. I'm sure she's going to be winning a lot of



matches like these. So yeah, going in 1-0 up feels great, helps me swing free a little bit more, so yeah, it was a really good start to the tournament.

Q. Billie Jean King has given an interview to the BBC this week. Not sure if you saw it. She was very flattering toward you, saying I've been watching her for a while, people should pay attention to her, I don't think people appreciate her enough.

KATIE BOULTER: Me?

Q. Yeah. How flattering is that to hear from her? How much are you relishing the role of being team leader this week now as you go forward to the quarters?

KATIE BOULTER: Well, firstly, no, I didn't see that, very kind words coming from a true legend of our sport. Means a lot.

For me, look, I don't mind flying under the radar. I keep my head down, I get the work done, keep moving my ranking up higher and higher. I'm really happy with the way I'm progressing, and that's all that really matters. I'm working hard every single day. I don't mind if that is under the radar or not. Doesn't really matter to me. I'm just going to keep working.

Yeah, I just do my best. That's all I can do. Yeah, I'm very happy with getting another win today, and hopefully keep pushing towards this week.

Q. You mentioned that you have barely played any indoor tournaments this year. On the tour there are barely any left really. In the Asia swing is where there would normally be indoor tournaments. Do you miss them at all? You obviously perform well in these conditions. There aren't many left?

KATIE BOULTER: I miss them so much (smiling). Oh, my God, quick matches. I love it (smiling).

No, I do miss them. I was actually just saying outside I think it would be really nice to have a few indoor tournaments. Obviously the guys have a few more the end of the year, and I do feel like my game suits it a little bit more.

So I would enjoy seeing them come back on the calendar. Yeah, I wouldn't complain.

Q. Anne, you know well that Great Britain in this competition for years struggled to get out of the zonal events, the qualifiers. Getting into the World Group a few years ago was such a big achievement. How does

the feel of this competition changed for you and Britain in general getting to the latter stages, semifinals a couple years, and now the quarterfinals?

CAPTAIN ANNE KEOTHAVONG: Yeah, look, I know that feeling very well, being stuck in the Europe/African zone back in my playing days.

But for me to be able to captain the team of incredible women, and for Katie to lead the way she does, and to have Emma back in the team, you know, playing great tennis, given the circumstances over the last few weeks, you know, I feel like I'm in a very fortunate position, and I feel like this is a team that, I said it at the start before the competition started, I really believe that we can win this.

You know, I don't have a problem saying that out loud, because we've got quality players who have shown in their own right what they're capable of, whether it's this year or in previous years. The fact they're here and putting themselves on the line, and Katie, especially after the season she's had and seven weeks in Asia, it's a credit to her and the others that they want to be part of this and see this team do well and have the same belief, as well.

Look, this competition has evolved. There have been lots of number of changes to the format, but regardless, we're here, and, you know, we've got a big goal and we really want to do our best to achieve that.

Q. Katie, just on Sunday, if it's as expected, you'll get a crack at Leylah Fernandez. Wonder how you see that match and how excited you are about that.

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, very excited. Obviously she's been at a lot of the tournaments I have been at recently. I have watched a lot of her play. I'm sure she's seen a lot of me, as well.

I think we know the matchups pretty well. I don't think I have ever played her, not that I can remember. Yeah, I mean, great player. Someone that I have a huge amount of respect for. She's the first person on the courts in the morning when you come to the site and the last person there, and she works extremely hard.

I do have a lot of respect for her. We all know what she's capable of. Yeah, it will be an absolute battle, but I'm looking forward to it.

Q. If you can expand on Canada and the kind of challenge they posed last year at this competition. They kind of shocked a lot of people by winning it. I just wonder your thoughts on that, as well.

CAPTAIN ANNE KEOTHAVONG: Yeah, what they achieved last year was remarkable; it really was. You know, we're not underestimating them by any means. They can be incredibly tough. They have fantastic team spirit, but so have we. They are hungry to defend their title, but we are hungry to win.

Look, they have got quality players. They've got a clear No. 1. No. 2, not so obvious, given, you know, the achievements of -- how do you say her name, Stakusic? Marina?

Yeah, you know, she really, you know, up until the Finals last year, I didn't know too much about her, but she did a fantastic job at 2, but they also have an experienced player in Rebecca Marino, indoor fast court.

Whoever it is, we go into it as well prepped as possible. Take a huge amount of confidence from the performances this evening, but there is still work to do.

Q. Both players today played really aggressive, really went for it. Is that the kind of attitude you want them to take into this tournament and really go for it like that?

CAPTAIN ANNE KEOTHAVONG: Yeah, I think the nature of the court and the surface, it really, you know, encourages kind of fast, aggressive tennis where possible. But, you know, there are other factors that you've got to throw in, as well, and you've got to be ready for everything.

But, you know, our singles players, we have players more than capable of stepping in and imposing themselves. They very much know what their game and identity is. Like anything, it's about executing it under pressure.

I know we can go into it as well prepped as possible, but, you know, representing your nation, nerves, everything, throw all of that into it, you know, it brings out the best in some players and in others not necessarily.

So I know I've got a team who thrive under pressure and in this competition, and they have shown it before and hopefully they can show it again.

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