

China Open

Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Beijing, China

Zhang Shuai

Press Conference



ZHANG SHUAI/M. Frech

6-4, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Zhang Shuai, congratulations. Strong win today. Into the quarterfinals. How special is this for you?

ZHANG SHUAI: Yeah, today is amazing match. Special on today, National Day. I'm so proud of myself and our country. A lot fans coming from the other cities because holiday. Super energy I get from them.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. This is the third time you've reached the quarterfinals of the China Open. Compared to the last time in 2018, is this any more special for you?

ZHANG SHUAI: Oh, yeah, for sure. Yeah, because this time when I coming to Beijing, I have a lot pressure and nervous because I already got 24 match lost. I have no idea how to win the match. Also I don't want another one more lost, 25 coming, with all Chinese fans. I don't know. When I think about this, I'm really sad.

I don't know. Walking back to the locker room, I don't know I should continue or not before the tournament. When I start to thinking about this, I feel I have no idea I should continue my singles match or stop or continue or maybe another 10 more match lost waiting for me. Yeah, I mean, very tough almost two years, more than one and a half years, without any winning.

But I have to say the US Open doubles final helping me a lot, a lot. So I have to thanks Kiki bring me to the final. Then I start building my confidence day by day, every round match.

Yeah, I mean, I don't want stop. I want continue win.

Q. Two days ago you compared yourself to Rafael Nadal. Who do you compare yourself to today?

ZHANG SHUAI: Hmm... I mean, I can't compare with my favorite player, I mean, just because the surface. I mean, on this surface I play so comfortable, I mean, like Rafa on French Open, Chatrier, the court. Still very far away from Rafa to me (smiling).

But, I mean, I'm really special for the China Open because I think I'm the one play the China Open almost every year. I think I am the mostly number one player playing like 15 times, even maybe more. So I know this court. I know everything better than anyone. Yeah, I know how to play on this court. I know how to win on this court (smiling).

Q. You said before the tournament when you were explaining kind of coming back that you had eight protected rankings, two wild cards. Was there a possibility that this might be the end of your career this season in singles? Now that you are closer to getting maybe back inside the top 120, 130, things like that, does that change things for next year?

ZHANG SHUAI: Yeah, I have only one protected ranking left. My coach request for the China Open, try to get this wild card. It means I have one more plus. So it's Wuhan. I have no so many chance. Before this tournament I thought, Oh, my God, just two tournament left. I mean, I'm not super woman with 24 lost.

In two tournament I come back to like my level, you know? But I told you many my friend in the tour, the player, coach, every day they tell me, You level still top. But my ranking 600. How can trust 600? Already coming back for seven months. I mean, I didn't play so many singles match. Still, how can trust yourself 600, but you still top?

I mean, every day when I'm wake up, I try to go courts early. I can play little bit longer, I can training on match court. At US Open, any tournament, I always try to first one on court. I working hard because I have my dream, but feeling very far from the dream.

I don't know. Sometimes after the practice, when I play some singles match, when I'm lost, I'm sad. But next day I'm go again, again, again every day. I trust when I'm working hard, I hope the good result coming. But



sometimes I lost the faith because the good result never come.

But my coach said, he said he trust me. He said, For sure one day, if you win one win, you can continue win a lot matches, like 2016.

Before the Grand Slam first win, before the Australia Open, he tell me many, many time, Yes, you lost every first round, but one day when you win first match, you will win a lot match. I think that's helping me a lot, a lot.

If someone tell me, You should go retire, maybe I'm done. I'm really thanks around me anyone always positive, always tell me, You can do it, trust yourself, trust me, you so good.

I'm start to, like, Really?

Then now, yeah, I'm really trust me and trust to everyone who tell me, You so good.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in Chinese.

Q. Any special feelings you want to share with us on this special day?

ZHANG SHUAI: First of all, I'm extremely happy. I am extremely happy, proud of myself for this achievement on this special day. I am really grateful to the reporters, to the public, the fans supporting me on this day, this very special day.

First of all, I wish great prosperity of this country. I see that this country is growing stronger. This is the deepest feeling I have today because from the first week of January, I started to travel around the world. Every time my mother says to me, a week ago I came back from Seoul, my mom said to me, Finally I'm back into Beijing, Beijing. Nowhere compares to Beijing. No one in any of this world is better than Beijing. So this kind of pride.

We born in this era, in this generation. I am really proud. The wonderful life we are enjoying is probably on the foundation of the work of previous generations. We received a lot of patriotic education when we were growing up. I think in each Chinese player, not only Chinese players, but athletes, I think it includes every Chinese person, this kind of deep-rooted pride in your country.

Of course, we will try hard on each day so that we can contribute our part to the prosperity of the next generation.

Q. You are celebrating again with the gesture of Mbapee, the soccer player. Can you also talk about

the impact from other players.

ZHANG SHUAI: A year and a half ago, two years ago, we were in France competing. At the time it was the World Cup. My coach is really interested in soccer. He's a great fan of Messi. Every day he talks about Messi. I thought I was brainwashed by him. Messi every day, Messi's goal every day. He asked me to cheer for Messi every day because he did not have that much time left, because it was the last World Cup for him.

I said, Okay, I'll cheer for Argentina, I'll cheer for Messi.

But deep inside me I really wanted to root for Mbapee. It was 0-2. Then I think it was 2-2. Then it was 3-3. I really like his power, his aggressiveness on the pitch. He is a hero fighting for his team, fighting for his country. He works hard till the end.

Even though he lost, he looked really disappointed at the end of the match, I feel the same. I sympathize with him, especially after such a hard-fought match. I feel for him.

But I'm also happy for Messi because eventually he realized his dream. I understand that Mbapee won a World Cup, so one each. And he still has opportunities for more.

When he was down 0-2, he was able to save the whole team. I really admire this kind of hero. He is a hero in my mind.

In my life, in my professional career, many times I was playing such a role on my team. When I was Tianjin team, when we were in the national games, the team tournaments, the Fed Cup, I was never so excited for a singles match as I was in the team competitions.

There were so many eras. They were booing from the audience. After winning those matches, I said I was never so excited before. It's hard to really describe it. When you are fighting for your country, for your team, the motivation is unimaginable. It's like what we did in the Olympics.

When you were competing in other tournaments, the level would not be so high. But when you are representing your country, you're wearing that uniform, the level is unimaginable, even though I wasn't able to do that in the Olympics, I wasn't able to show my best, I wasn't able to achieve what we expected.

I treated the US Open, the China Open, as the Olympics. With such a sense of responsibility and honor, eventually we can see a miracle.

Q. Your next opponent is Badosa. You've never



played her. How will you prepare for this match?

ZHANG SHUAI: I never saw the draw because I never really win a match, so there was no point for me to look forward to the next round. In this tournament, I really never think about the next match. Winning one was enough for me.

In this draw, everyone has a higher ranking than me. When you are barefoot, you have nothing to lose. Just step on court, just play. So I do not have much to think about, to prepare. I will just focus on myself.

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