

Brisbane International

Monday, 30 December 2024

Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Kimberly Birrell

Press Conference

K. BIRRELL/P. Hon

3-6, 7-5, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on a great win today. Can you give us your thoughts on the match and how you were able to come back from a set down.

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah. Obviously when I saw the draw, playing a friend is always tough. I think we both did a pretty good job of putting that aside, focused on our side of the courts.

Yeah, you never know what you're going to get first match of the year. But I'm really happy with the way I played. Glad I get to play again.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You've had I think five three-setters against Priscilla. This was true to form. You came back. You must be happy with the way you were able to dig deep.

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yes. I knew that I had to be up for a battle. Like you said, we've had some long matches. Especially our last couple were big, long three-setters.

I guess in a way, even when I was down, I knew that if I kept focusing on the process, taking it one point at a time, I kind of did start to feel the momentum shift, that I was still in for a chance.

Yeah, I just tried to keep it simple and keep moving forward. Then I was able to get on top of her in the second and third.

Q. You've had a good back end of the year. Final of the Japan Open. Do you feel like you brought some good form into this tournament?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, definitely. I'm really happy with the way that I sort of turned around some of my results at the beginning of last year that weren't amazing.

Yes, I was sort of identifying a few things I needed to work on. I think I've really been able to improve on



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those. I was getting the benefit of that the end of last year.

Yeah, I was really happy with the way I was playing in the Asia Swing. Then to have a little bit of time off was really great. Feeling very fresh coming into this season.

Q. Your next opponent, a tough one, world No. 9, Emma Navarro. How are you approaching that contest?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, obviously she's a great player. She had an amazing season at the end of last year, as well. We actually played not that long ago in Hong Kong.

Yeah, I think it's great that I've been able to feel her ball. I kind of know what's coming. But it's a new year. I think we're playing on maybe New Year's Day or tomorrow, I'm not sure.

Yeah, I guess it will be her first match of the year, so you never know what will happen. Obviously, these are my home courts, home conditions. Really used to the heat. I'll give it my best and hope that it's a good match.

Q. Back to today's match. Priscilla has had the edge over you in some of those longer battles. Tough mental balance in knowing what you're about to get from her, having to recall that knowledge, and also trying to forget the fact...

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: ...she's one of my best friends. Yeah, it's real tricky. We're well-versed in it. We know how to put our friendship aside and focus on tennis. We'll still be friends long after our careers end. I'm very confident in that, which is great.

Then we're both very competitive, too. Even in practice we get competitive with each other. I think that's really helped us in our careers overall playing in juniors, then coming up together. I think it's pretty rare and very special that we both still play and we practice together all the time.

I knew her game, I knew she knew my game. I think it was more about just focusing on myself and the things that I've been working on, practicing during my pre-season, and trusting myself, my game, my fitness level.



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That's what I was able to do.

Q. You came in fresh, she went through qualifying. Roles kind of reversed for the next round. Really interesting.

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, that's true. I think, yeah, even playing quallies can sometimes be more beneficial to that player, too, because they've played in the conditions. I guess that's how I'll look at it, try to put a positive spin on it (smiling).

I'll know that I've also played on center court, because it does play a little bit differently to the outdoor courts in terms of the wind and the speed of the court.

I think she is No. 10 in the world, No. 9 in the world, top 10, but I think I've got some things going my way going into the match.

Yeah, we'll see what happens.

Q. A lot of interest in today's action. Big crowd, tremendous amount of noise. Must have been positive and enjoyable?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, totally definitely enjoyable. Super special to play in front of my friends and my family, the home crowd, even though it was tough for them having to cheer for two Aussies.

It's amazing to start the year here in Brisbane. I think everyone in Queensland really gets behind sport, live sport. The caliber of players that come back year after year to Brisbane International is amazing. Says a lot for how well the tournament looks after of us.

Yeah, super proud of being a Queenslander. Getting to start here is great.

Q. No split allegiances tomorrow.

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, that's true. I'll have the crowd on my side.

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