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Wim Fissette

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. This is kind of a general question, but the microphones are really picking up a lot of what is coming out of the coaching boxes at this tournament.

WIM FISSETTE: I saw that.

Q. Does it make you self-conscious?

WIM FISSETTE: Yes.

Q. Do you feel like you have to watch what you say?

WIM FISSETTE: Yeah, like, I don't know if it's on all the courts or if it's just on Ashe. But yeah, I mean, yeah, you have to watch your words, right? Of course just like the players go through some emotions during the match, so do we as team members.

So I'm trying to be aware of the microphones and, like, watch my words.

Q. As a fan, as a person watching it, do you find it interesting? Do you find it illuminating? Is it good for the sport to have more of the coaching?

WIM FISSETTE: For the fans it's interesting, I think, yeah, absolutely. I also, as a coach, I also find it interesting to watch matches and listen to what coaches say. You know, like some try to motivate, some try to keep their player calm, and some use more strategic things to help their player.

Yeah, I think it's very interesting, yeah.

Q. You have worked with a lot of different players over the years. What were your initial impressions of Qinwen and her game, and if she reminds you of anyone you've worked with before?

WIM FISSETTE: Yeah, I watched some matches last year. I was kind of impressed by her, first of all, like the athlete she is. It's very impressive, strong and really fast

on the court.

Also really explosive, and you see that in her strokes, like, big serve, big forehands. Lots of possibilities. But also still pretty raw. I think it's, like, really interesting project where you can, like, really build the player.

I think she's different than -- I mean, to compare, you always can compare 10% there, 10% there, but I think her game style is different where she's the player with the most rotations on the ball from the forehand and the backhand side. That makes it, like, strategically, like, different or you have to use those strengths, yeah, in the right way, of course.

Q. The forehand already looks a lot smoother since you have started working with her. How much of that has been a focus, and what in your mind still needs to be improved?

WIM FISSETTE: I mean, the forehand, it's a really big weapon, but it could be a lot more steady, stable. You know, honestly so far we had, like, one really, like, practice week. Outside of that was, like, two, three days of, like, having time to work on something before, like, you know, two, three days before the tournament you want to go into confidence mode and feeling good mode. So we were trying to use these few days to, yeah, build her game.

But the forehand, you know, it's an emotional thing. She's a bit more emotional, she gets a little bit more higher on the legs, little less rotation on the shoulders. I felt like yesterday when she had, like, maybe nothing to lose and she was a bit more relaxed, you saw the forehand was a lot better than the previous matches.

Q. She was in here yesterday and she said that one of the messages you've been giving to her is you're never as aggressive as you think you are. You can always be more. And that her aggressiveness and keeping that mindset has been a big key to her results. Can you talk through that a little bit. She always struck me as an aggressive player. She wanted to hit the cover off the ball all the time. Where are you seeing, in terms of aggression and not being aggressive, is that in the decision-making or is that in the actual stroke?

WIM FISSETTE: What I've seen so far since I started was



sometimes, especially on the grass, was way too aggressive, and then, like, too passive, like some matches after, on hard. As a young player, you're looking for, yeah, that ideal balance.

For her, I think, like, just choice-making is still a very interesting topic. I feel like on the clay she really has found her game, but on the hard I still feel like she's looking to understand who she really is and to use her strokes like the best possible way with the right strategy.

Yeah, I mean, that's what we're trying to help her, make little adjustments, how she feels with that to maximize her strengths. That's, like, that heavy spin forehand combined with a little bit more flat backhand.

But I do see her, I mean, plan A should be, like, controlling the point from the serve or from the return, and plan B is definitely with her speed and also, like, her defensive skills should also be super consistent, but it's more as a plan B.

Q. You're one of the best-known coaches in this sport. I'm sure you get approached a lot with opportunities. What goes into your mind when evaluating whether this is someone that you want to work with, where you think you can have an impact, and what were the boxes that she sort of checked in that that made this the kind of thing that you wanted to commit to?

WIM FISSETTE: Honestly, it's always a guess. Because you watch the player and you see, like, certain skills, you know, like for her, again, like the athlete she is, her explosiveness, the strokes she has. Also, I heard before she was super hardworking and super ambitious. Those things you want to hear.

Then you start to work with the player and you really get to know the player. You see, like, let's say, why she is where she is, like, say, 25 in the world where she is already there at her age but also why she's not, like, top-10 player yet.

So once you start working with the player, then you get, I feel like you only have 50% of the information before. It's, let's say, how quick can somebody improve. You want to work on something. It's always easy to say from the outside, and especially the commentators, it's always easy to say, Why doesn't that player have a better second serve or a better forehand?

Then you start working with the player and you think it's going to be super easy. Then you also realize, it's maybe a little bit more difficult than we thought, because sometimes they're like, I don't know, past injuries, maybe the body is not ready to do certain things. Maybe it's just difficult for the player to make a change.

So then, yeah, it's always, like, it's a gamble when you start working with someone.

Q. How long does this generally take you, this sort of information-gathering phase where you really think, okay, now I know my player?

WIM FISSETTE: Depends on the player as well. Also the timing when you start working with someone. Let's say the moment I started was, like, three days before her first grass court tournament, and let's say the grass courts are the most difficult surface for her right now, then you're immediately into like tournament mode and you see her play on a grass court where she's not extremely comfortable right now, she needs a bit more time and matches.

So it's really hard. I feel like honestly I'm still discovering after, like, three months and you need a longer time, more training weeks to understand the player more.

And also, with her, like, let's say her parents are not here, or they also don't really speak English, so that way it's always also difficult to get, like, more information. You know, I have a lot of questions for the player and I want some honest answers but I cannot -- you need to go step by step to really understand and get to know the player.

Q. You just said that every players are different. She's different. But do you think that your experience of being coach of Naomi helps you in terms of understanding Asian culture or, like, Asian behavior, as well like that?

WIM FISSETTE: Yeah, you know, like Chinese player was missing in my cultural knowledge (smiling). But it's really I've worked with lots of good players, different players, different cultures, and you always need to adjust.

You know, now with Chinese players, it's very different than, say, Naomi or, like, the Western players. It's a big adjustment, I must say. Honestly, I must say I'm still learning.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the bigger picture from your perspective, looking at China in general, maybe both on the men's and women's side and maybe even across Asia and just what you see maybe the potential is there for growth and what kind of athletes are starting to pop up.

WIM FISSETTE: Yeah, I mean, I think tennis in China started with the success of Li Na. As I understand, a lot of academies were there after and tennis clubs or tennis was

becoming really popular. So I feel like now this young generation that started to play more when Li Na is having such success, I think that's a generation we are seeing now.

I think they did well with also attracting, like, foreign coaches to China and getting their experience. I think there are interesting times coming, because you see a lot of Chinese players, and what is very obvious, that they are, like, maybe working much harder than all the rest.

It's in their culture to work a lot of hours, and that's what they do also as athletes. So they gain also advantages with just, like, working extremely hard. Just, yeah, focusing 100% on their sport. That's definitely what I feel with Qinwen.

Q. Have you thought about going into tennis commentating, broadcasting? You have been so candid with your responses. Former coach of Simona Halep, what's your thought about what she's going through right now and whether you think it's been a fair process, if you haven't talked about that yet?

WIM FISSETTE: Well, never thought about commentating, to be honest. Also, I don't know, I just love my job. I love coaching. So that's definitely, like, my main focus for the next years. But who knows, one day?

Simona, yeah, I worked with her for a good year. Was really nice time. I mean, as far as I know her, 100% believe in her not being guilty of taking something she shouldn't take. But obviously something must have happened, or they must have found something in her blood.

Honestly, I haven't read, like, all the details about it, but, you know, she's waiting already very, very long time to hear what's gonna happen to her, and, like, you know, she's been really good for women's tennis. Like, she always showed up and was fighting for every match, you know, like very popular player.

I hope to see her back very soon.

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