

April 3, 2018

**K. AHN defeats S. Stosur
6-2, 6-4
First Round**

Q. You said in your on-court interview after the match that you had a game plan that you came up with specifically for Sam and you were able to execute. Can you tell us more specifically what you did today on court to get that win?

KRISTIE AHN: Yeah. Definitely, I mean obviously she's one of the best clay-courtiers on tour, and I tried to play aggressive and not let her dictate with her forehand because obviously she's one of the best as well. So I just tried -- that was kind of my game plan going in was trying to stay in points and actually try and dictate points myself.

Q. Congratulations. Big win on a big stage. You seemed to tighten up a little bit in the second set. What helped you overcome that?

KRISTIE AHN: A little bit. Yeah. I definitely could feel it. It's obviously a big moment just to play against someone of that caliber and it starts creeping in your head that, oh, I can actually do this. Definitely for me the bringing my coach on court was pretty wouldn't say a game changer, but she definitely just kind of put it back in perspective. I have nothing to lose to start working my points and help me kind of calm my nerves.

Q. You're a Stanford graduate?

KRISTIE AHN: Yes, ma'am.

Q. 2014?

KRISTIE AHN: (Smiles).

Q. And has Danielle Collins and her surge on the tour given you any extra energy to play better? Do you follow her?

KRISTIE AHN: Yeah. It's pretty amazing to see -- I think she graduated maybe a year or two after myself, and I think we're the only two college graduates of American universities. So like in the top 250 or something. So it's really cool to see her doing so well, and I've gotten to know her -- I didn't

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well, but afterwards we've played each other a couple of times in the past year and it's been really cool to see her jumps, and obviously she took out Venus, which was a huge ordeal because we were watching her as kids. So definitely I think she inspires a lot of girls who have graduated for sure.

Q. So Shenay Perry is here coaching you?

KRISTIE AHN: Yes.

Q. She used to play here.

KRISTIE AHN: Yeah, yeah. So I've known her since I was like 16. And she was still playing at the time. And then actually, it was about two off seasons ago, so end of, what, '16, Kathy Rinaldi called her in for a camp at USTA in Boca, and I was like, oh, hey, how's it going? We were kind of like working together on the court, and she was only there for a week and she stayed for another week, and I was joking, like, hey, want to be my coach? And she was like, yeah, sure! And I was really, really? Like that's actually how it went. So yeah, and then we just kind of started -- she barely traveled last year. Most of the time she was -- we would just work for a couple of days or a week at a time. I was traveling between Orlando and Boca, with the USTA moving to Orlando. And yeah, it's been -- she's traveled a couple of times already this year, so I'm really happy to have her here.

Q. Is she still a USTA coach or is she private with you?

KRISTIE AHN: No. She never was a USTA coach. But she's a good friend of Kathy's, so Kathy called her in. Obviously it's great to have that experience for a group of girls. And yeah, now she's my private coach.

Q. You had a pretty amazing third ball break, and in your coaching timeout with her, you looked right at the camera, which we never see.

KRISTIE AHN: Breaking the fourth wall.

Q. Breaking the fourth wall. Exactly.

KRISTIE AHN: I told myself I would do it.

Q. That was your first time being in a televised coaching match. You've been coached a lot before in college or whatever, but how different is it knowing your conversation is going live over the air?

KRISTIE AHN: Yeah, I think she was actually more nervous than I was.

Q. She mentioned it.

KRISTIE AHN: Yeah. Pretty sure. It was fun. Like the first one was pretty lighthearted, just kind of reminders, and then obviously that poor, poor fist pump did not go as planned. And then the second one it was much more serious. She could tell I was nervous, so it was good to have her tell me straightforward things and get on and off the court.

Q. Okay. There's a hashtag on Twitter called "fear the tree." Okay. I'm out of the loop. Can you explain what that is?

KRISTIE AHN: So our unofficial mascot is the tree for Stanford. So yeah. It's just a tree, just a dancing tree. Our official mascot is Cardinal, the shade of red, and then our unofficial mascot is a tree. I guess the students voted on it years back. Stanford students. That should explain it.

Q. Okay. Smart people.

KRISTIE AHN: Yeah.

Q. Speaking of Stanford, then, so would you have wanted them to play "All Right Now" after your win?

KRISTIE AHN: Oh, yeah. If they'd have played it, I would have been like, "oh!" It didn't occur to me, but yeah, that would have been awesome for sure.

Q. And talking about being one of the rare college graduates on tour, did you ever think not to graduate, like to leave early? Was that ever --

KRISTIE AHN: An option, no. The only time at like I was -- it was also a pretty -- the only decision I kind of struggled with was kind of when I was in high school deciding to go to college or not because I was doing really well, but my parents were like education, education, you will go. I was like, okay. And then obviously Stanford is not a bad school, but towards the end of high school I

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kind of like was having a tough relationship with tennis, so it's actually a good time for me to see if I wanted to keep playing tennis after. So I was like, I'm going to spend my four years in college and we're going to see from there. And I was injured for a year and a half or so, so I kind of missed it a little bit.

Q. So is that how you kind of sorted out those kind of questions about your relationship with tennis and all that?

KRISTIE AHN: Yeah. Yeah. And obviously being on a team atmosphere, having search other girls with you day in, day out kind of reminds you of why you're doing it, how much fun it is.

Q. And on today's match, what does getting a win like that over a Grand Slam champion, former Top 5 player, all that sort of stuff, what does that mean for you? That's a big smile.

KRISTIE AHN: Yeah. I don't know. It's like these are the moments that you work for, and you don't quite believe them until it's there. And hopefully I take it and I can run with it and it'll give me further confidence.

I've taken some tough losses this year, so like I feel like it's my -- not my moment, but you know, like my hard work like eventually will pay off, kind of like Danielle as well. She's been gaining momentum steadily. So it's kind of like when the opportunity presents itself, being able to take it.

Q. Go back to a minute to your college days, what did you major in?

KRISTIE AHN: Science technology in society. So it's like a combination of business and tech and you could concentrate it however much you want, more business side or more tech side.

Q. What was yours?

KRISTIE AHN: I was pretty much smack dab in the middle. So we would consider ourselves like the middle men between the business people and like the decoders because they don't speak the same language apparently.

Q. Do you think you'll go back to that some day?

KRISTIE AHN: I mean that would be amazing. I've never held a job before. So I don't

know. I am pretty rusty on just about everything. But yeah, it's honestly for me, tennis is really exciting because I know that I'm going to go back to -- I'm going to be able -- I want to work after tennis. So this for me is a very finite amount of time. I don't know how long, but for me it's like oh, this is awesome. I'm going to spend X amount of years playing and then I know I'm going to hopefully go to New York because that's where I'm from. Silicon Valley wouldn't be bad either, but get a job and be able to work and put my brain to the stone.

Q. Danielle says that she has confidence on court and remains calm on court because she knows that if anything goes wrong, injury, whatever, that she can fall back on her education. Do you feel more confident knowing that you have that degree?

KRISTIE AHN: It's a pretty double-edged sword because yes, you have the confidence that you can fall back on something, but at the same time, when things aren't going well, you're like, why am I doing this, I can fall back on something, I could be doing something else right now. So actually, last year I was kind of -- last year was kind of going to be my last year on tour. I was going to give it three years since I graduated. And I was like, okay, this is it. It's been good. It's been fun. I'm ready to sort of move on with my life. And then it was actually exactly a year ago in Monterey I qualified and I won a round, I think, and then like steam -- and then I also started working with my coach, Shenay Perry, and things just started rolling from there. So hopefully I can keep that momentum going for some more years.

Q. You went to college -- you must have overlapped with Mallory.

KRISTIE AHN: Yes.

Q. Did their experiences turning pro and their various WTA junior I see which have gone differently, did they inform your expectations at all for what to think of this world? Have you talked to them about it?

KRISTIE AHN: Yeah. I mean obviously Mallory was like a blink of an eye, she was in the Top 100 and it was so quick. And I talked to her a lot about her experience, and I think just the transition kind of and all of a sudden go from a team to being by yourself, and she was like, I'm

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alone in some European country, and she's like, why am I doing this. It's a pretty big struggle constantly of like -- even when things are going well, it's like, how long am I going to keep doing this. And then obviously Gibbs has been steadily tracking for years, and you know, there's tough moments, and you just kind of learn to enjoy the moment that you're in and whatever happens happens, I guess.

Q. Just curious, I mean how do your parents kind of react to you being a professional tennis player and not going right into the job force?

KRISTIE AHN: Do we really want to ask this question?

Q. I'm curious because I do have experience in it. So I'm just curious.

KRISTIE AHN: Yeah. So when I graduated I told my parents that I wanted to turn pro and they weren't too elated with that. For the first couple of years I didn't gain much traction, you know, it's tough to go from a support system, having coaches, having fitness trainers, having the physical trainers and then going to by yourself. I moved to Florida for whatever reason and had no real coach or any sort of structure. And my parents constantly were asking me, when are you done, are you done, is this your last one, is this your last year. And it just kept going and going, and I think it wasn't until the end of 2016 that my dad was finally like, all right, I trust you, I know you're going to know when you're done. And I trust that you will make that decision smartly, and I was like, I appreciate that. But yeah, in the beginning it was pretty tough to -- I mean when you're ranked 900, it's not their pride of like, yes, my daughter is playing professional tennis, but she's ranked 900. (Laughs). I think one of five sounds a lot better. So -- and then you know, oh, but you have a degree, it's going to waste. But I think it's a pretty common sort of -- not only in tennis. If you want to do something perhaps a little bit off book, as maybe you know, like it's -- you know. But I think eventually obviously I can say they're proud of me. I got to talk to both of them today. So I'm excited about that.

Q. Just one quick question. I understand from following you on social media that you're real into gifs and stuff. So if you

had to pick a gif right now to summarize your day, what would come to mind?

KRISTIE AHN: Easily the one of me and my coach. You made a gif of it. Me and my coach. She's just giving me the fist pump. Or I guess there's one of Tom Brady who goes for the high five and just gets left in the dust. That would also work well. Or just some sort of party excited gif. I'll have to dig deep. This one's going to be awesome.

End of Interview

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