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Sony Ericsson Open

S. PEER/T. Hendler

6-1, 7-6

An interview with:

SHAHAR PEER

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Did you know much about her before the match?

SHAHAR PEER: Um, actually, I know her personally, but I don't know how she plays. I know she's Jewish, and I know her for many years already, like two or three years already.

She's a nice girl, but I didn't know anything about how she plays.

Q. You constantly say and your bio says how much you like to play in the United States and everything. Obviously no visa problems, but can you give other reasons plus that or whatever?

SHAHAR PEER: Yeah, I mean, because I get a lot, a lot of support here in the States, and I really appreciate it. I like playing here. I like to play in New York a lot. I've got a lot of support in Indian Wells, too, in the big tournaments.

So I'm really enjoying, and this is one of the biggest tournaments, of course, so it's a good tournament. And today, you know, I was thinking it would be less full than today. It was quite crowded, so it was very nice to play in the stadium.

Q. This is really I think second largest area for Jews outside of Israel. Did you feel that out there? Did you feel a lot of support?

SHAHAR PEER: Yeah, I do. The most you feel it is when they say each of your names in the beginning of the match. When they represent me, so of course I get more support most of the times.

Yeah, so it's nice, and I like to play in front of the crowd.

Q. I know you spoke about it last week, but if you could, talk a little bit about the Dubai incident. You came through looking very mature and sensible about how it all played out, but if you could give us your thoughts.

SHAHAR PEER: Yeah, I mean, I think I been talking about it maybe a thousand times. But anyway, I mean, it's already past. Like I was saying the whole time, I was very disappointed at the beginning, and I was very angry, too, because I don't think there should be any politics and sports together.

But I think what I achieved and what the world achieved, that Andy Ram was going the next week after, and that was the main thing. That none of the athletes, doesn't matter if they're Jewish, Israelis, black or white or Muslims, they will get hurt of their nationalities or color or whatever. Everybody has to be equal, and we all need to get the same things as any other player or athlete.

I think the world step up and showed also his opinion, because you saw how much media I got and how much all the world supported me. I really -- I can really appreciate it, and I was really excited.

So unfortunately I couldn't go, but I think I really achieved what I wanted to achieve.

Q. And you feel comfortable that next year there will be no problem if you want to go?

SHAHAR PEER: Yeah, I'm sure there will not be, because Andy was there. I already got confirmation that next year I will go there for sure.

Q. Andy Roddick was the only player who decided that he was not comfortable under the circumstances going. Can you say how you felt about that, and also if you've talked with Andy about it?

SHAHAR PEER: Yeah, I mean, I was really surprised, but a good surprise. I really appreciate it. I wrote him an e-mail, and when I saw him in Indian Wells I went to him and I came to him and said thank you, and that I really

appreciate it. I think he did an amazing thing to show that he also believes shouldn't be involved any sport and politics.

He's a huge athlete and he's a very respectful person, so I really respect him now. I'm telling you, the response I got after, not only for me but also people saying about Andy Roddick, that it's nice he didn't go, I really appreciated it. It was huge. I got a lot of people saying and supporting it. So I can really just thank him and appreciate what he did for me.

Q. Did you know him pretty well? I know you have the same agent.

SHAHAR PEER: Yeah, but no.

Q. You didn't know him that well?

SHAHAR PEER: No.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about tonight, about the second set?

SHAHAR PEER: To tell you the truth, before doing this match I was nervous. I don't know exactly why. Maybe because I don't know how she plays. I didn't really know how she's playing tennis. I mean, I heard a bit of things, but not too many.

And, you know, I had a good run last week in Indian Wells. I really played good tennis. I was just a bit nervous. I think I had to take my chances more. She was playing good. She stepped up in the second set, and I didn't take my chances. I had so many, but actually, I could be there another hour if I wouldn't take the second set.

So eventually, I'm happy, but of course I will have to play better next round.

Q. You mentioned that obviously one of the consequences of Dubai was nobody wants to mix sports and politics. Davis Cup at Sweden they didn't allow spectators because of anti-Israel protests. How did you feel about that situation so soon after Dubai?

SHAHAR PEER: It shouldn't happen. Like I was saying, shouldn't be involved any sport and politics, but I guess the Swedish people felt that it would be more safe to each of the teams to play without crowd. I was not really there. I don't know really what happened there. I'm just reading like you guys.

But, you know, eventually we won the tie, and that's the most important.

Q. Correct me if I'm wrong, I think it was two years ago before in the Fed Cup match with Canada that there was another team that was supposed to play Israel but they didn't show up again because of some political situation. Israel got a forfeit, but all the players were angry about that.

SHAHAR PEER: It was Indonesia that was supposed to come to Israel. They had already visas and everything, and they just eventually didn't show up.

Q. Here's the point, because all this happened with Dubai, do you really feel that the political situation with Israel will end? Because, again, you represent Fed Cup, the men are in Davis Cup, that this thing could happen again.

SHAHAR PEER: I think that I achieved what I wanted to achieve. I'm not going to talk all day and night about politics. I'm an athlete. I want to concentrate on my tennis, and I hope it will never happen to any of the athletes, because it's not the right things to happen.

Q. Not that long ago, Fed Cup and Davis Cup players basically played for their country and for expenses without any kind of salary. Now you have like American players are making big dollars. Probably somebody like yourself playing from a smaller country might be getting small amounts of money from your federation. Do you feel maybe Fed Cup and Davis Cup they should play just for love of country and no money, or...

SHAHAR PEER: Um, I'm not going to answer this question. I'm not talking about money. Like I said, just professional, please.

Q. I wanted to congratulate you for being a doubles finalist last week. One of the things I noticed in 2009 compared to 2008, from what I saw of your results your play improved, and I understand you're working with relatively new coaches. Has that helped you either in your technique with strokes or in terms of your concentration?

SHAHAR PEER: Yeah, I would not show this match as improvement, but if somebody saw me play last week and the last few weeks, you will see that I improved a lot. I'm much more aggressive. I'm hitting the ball better, I'm not

defensive like last year. I'm feeling very comfortable.

I'm really enjoying with my coach, and I think I just have to keep on and work like I will, because I think my tennis is in the right position now.

Q. I'm just curious, Roger Federer, a lot of the top players answered this question. It wasn't directed at you. Why do you think that's a subject you're not talking about?

SHAHAR PEER: Sorry?

Q. About paying Fed Cup and Davis Cup players?

SHAHAR PEER: Because I don't want to talk about money. I don't need to speak about money. I will not asking you about your money. I'm not going to answer about my...

Q. It wasn't directed to you.

SHAHAR PEER: I understand. I understand. But, you know, if Federer or the other players, I appreciate they want to answer. But me, I don't want to speak about money.

Q. At Indian Wells, the fact that both you and Andy made it into the finals. I mean, like Dudi talks about it that he represents Israel when he's playing in the Davis Cup. Do you feel a special accomplishment that both of you did it?

SHAHAR PEER: It's always a special accomplishment when you make a final. I mean -- yeah, I mean for both of us.

Q. Of course, but you and Andy both.

SHAHAR PEER: So what is the question? I'm sorry.

Q. It was wonderful for you, the fact that both you and Andy did it. But it puts Israel on the map a little. Was that special for you?

SHAHAR PEER: Like I said, it's always special to get to a final. You always want to achieve as high as you can. I'm really happy for Andy. I know they three match points in the finals, but it happens. But we had also chances in the final. Unfortunately we lost it. But I'm really happy we made the final. I hope every week there will be as many Israelis in the final as possible.

Q. How is your relationship with Gisela Dulko? Will you play for the whole season?

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SHAHAR PEER: For now we're also going to play in Madrid and French Open there. We have been playing last week, and the weeks before. Last year we didn't play good, so I'm really happy we found ourself last week.

Because even before we enjoyed playing together, but we didn't do a good result. So I'm really happy that also we played good tennis and we're also enjoying together on the court. Because she's a really nice girl and we also enjoying, and this is also important.

Q. Your next match is against Venus Williams. Anything that you feel could get you ready for that match?

SHAHAR PEER: I have to play better. That's for sure.

Q. You only played her once, am I right?

SHAHAR PEER: Yeah.

Q. Anything you can take from that match, or too long ago?

SHAHAR PEER: It's too long ago, but, you know, Venus, she's a great champion. She's a good player. I will just have to play better. I think if I play like last week, which there is no reason why not, I can play good and it can be a good match.

Every day is a new day, so tomorrow I will play my doubles. I will try to work on some things to win the doubles, and then to get ready for the next match.

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