

**July 14, 2010**



An interview with:

## **ANNA KOURNIKOVA**

ROSIE CREWS: Thank you for joining us this afternoon. We're talking with Anna Kournikova, who is playing for the St. Louis Aces this year. It's her eighth season back in World TeamTennis, her third with the Aces. Anna will be playing four matches starting this Saturday evening in St. Louis with her teammate Lindsay Davenport on Saturday night. Then next week, Monday the 19th in Boston, Tuesday the 20th in Philadelphia, and finishing up her season on Wednesday, July 21st, in Washington, D.C.

At this time we'll turn it over to questions for Anna Kournikova.

**Q. It's going to be fun to see with you with Lindsay, going up against Martina. Why the eight years in TeamTennis and how much did Billie Jean King have to do with you getting into World TeamTennis and continuing to play?**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Well, it's absolutely a perfect format. I mean, it's such a brilliant idea, I'm surprised that we only have how many teams, only 10 teams? I wish it would be like 50 teams in every state. It would be so cool.

It's such a brilliant idea, the World TeamTennis. The format, the whole bells and whistles, the mixed, singles, doubles, men, women, three generations, just an amazing format. For me it's a great experience to be back on the court again. Like I always say, since I don't play professionally or even full-time, it's a great experience to be back on the court. That's why I think this league really works.

It gives the players that are currently on the tour a chance to transition from Wimbledon, from Europe, into the American season, and people like me, who are not on the tour full-time.

I will definitely hopefully play this league as much as I can and as long as I can possibly play. I'll probably stop playing when I'll be in a wheelchair coming out on the court (laughter).

**Q. How much of a decision was it when you decided to play that everybody wants to honor Billie Jean King and what she did for tennis?**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: I was really young. I was 20 years old. I was aware of what Billie Jean King had done, what kind of an amazing person she is, just a total legend.

But the decision was really based on just playing the World TeamTennis league. I thought it would be fun, a great opportunity, a great interaction with the fans. It was so equal and fast and kind of just very convenient, you know, playing five games, and just the whole organizational side of it.

Obviously, once you play, then you realize the impact it makes. You realize even more how cool it is. For me, I would jump off a building if Billie Jean would say that.

**Q. I know this is your eighth season. What keeps you coming back to World TeamTennis?**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Exactly what I was just saying in the question and answer before: It's just a perfect opportunity for me to be back competing in a shorter version of a real tour or tennis tournament where my body can really hold up. It's a perfect opportunity for me to still be out there, to enjoy tennis, to play for the fans.

I love the game of tennis. It's a perfect opportunity. Obviously, the TeamTennis is comfortable, fun. For me, it's even in terms of how well it's organized, how fast everything goes. In three hours you get to play everything, the fans get to see everything. Really, it's brilliant.

ROSIE CREWS: Can you say something about playing with Lindsay?

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Oh, yeah. I've

known Lindsay obviously my whole career. We've had some amazing singles matches against each other. We actually have been partners before. We played a bunch of Smash Hits with Elton John and Billie Jean King. Also I've played real WTA doubles tournaments I think with Lindsay somewhere like in San Diego or somewhere. So, you know, we've been partners before.

So this should be really fun. I'm really excited that she's on our team this year, as we have a new coach who is actually Lindsay's brother-in-law. Obviously, he's an amazing doubles player himself. He's probably helping a lot the team.

ROSIE CREWS: We'll point out the Aces are in first place right now.

**Q. I know you're going to be in Philadelphia for only one day. Any plans to sightsee a little bit or check out any of the city?**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: I'm just excited to be at Villanova. I haven't been at Villanova in years. I'm really looking forward to going there. We're just going to be focusing on our match. I've been to Philadelphia many, many times. I've seen most of it. I really enjoy the city.

But I'll have to do what the coach tells me to do and what the team is doing. It's all about practice, preparation, playing well, performing well that day.

**Q. This format this season is kind of short. How does this differ from your experience throughout the rest of the year?**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: How does it differ?

**Q. How does World TeamTennis differ from the tour that you're in throughout the year? It's a short season.**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Well, I mean, honestly, it's perfect for me. It's four matches within six days. The travel is kind of hard just because you have to travel and play three days in a row in three different cities.

But it's totally fine because it's convenient just in terms of everything is already worked out, figured out. I think somewhere we're not even flying, we're just going to take a train and drive, so it's not that bad at all.

I love that kind of format, just in a week, fast-paced. I'd rather get on the road and stay on the road instead of getting in and out. I like this. I really do.

Most of my exhibitions throughout the year in charity matches are just like one match here, two matches there. The most is like two matches and stuff. So this is actually kind of nice to get into a routine and a rhythm.

ROSIE CREWS: The last time Anna was at Villanova, I believe she and Martina Hingis won the Advanta Championships doubles title there.

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Yay!

ROSIE CREWS: I believe that was '99 or 2000.

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: 2000.

ROSIE CREWS: It was 2000. So it will be good to come back there.

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Yeah.

**Q. How are you looking forward to playing in the Boston area for the first time as a debut?**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: I'm really looking forward to it. I mean, I love the Boston area, spend a lot of time there. What do you mean 'debut'? I haven't played there in World TeamTennis?

ROSIE CREWS: Anna played World TeamTennis several years ago at a different venue.

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: I was like, What? I was there against the Lobsters before.

I'm really looking forward to it, again, getting back on the road with World TeamTennis. It's such a great opportunity. It's like going back, meeting with old friends and family. Every team, every host team, does an amazing job of welcoming the other team and the players. We are under some really strict rules to make sure things are really good and really well-organized. All the owners do a really good job. Looking forward to going back to Boston, as well.

Where is the venue, Rosie?

ROSIE CREWS: It's in Middleton, outdoors. Last time you played it was at Harvard.

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Cool. It's outdoors?

ROSIE CREWS: Yes, it is.

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Well, hopefully the weather will be nice.

**Q. I know a lot of people follow you up here in Boston. You're very involved with promoting kids organizations. What does it truly mean to be a role model to young kids?**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: For me it's just a

nice way really, a great way, to give back to tennis and to sport because it really taught me so many things. It created a life for me. Being born in the Soviet Union, not having much, I was really able to build a life for myself through sport.

I would hope to wish and inspire kids that, you know, you can really learn a lot and develop really well through sports if you're involved in sports. You don't have to necessarily become a professional tennis player or soccer player, whatever, a professional athlete, but just sports in general teaches young kids so many things when they're developing, like teamwork, like leadership, like discipline, the way to lose, the way to win, setting goals, all those things.

I think it's really important for kids to be involved in sports. It teaches really a lot of great lessons that you can even always apply and use in life. So that's what I try to tell the kids at the Boys and Girls Club and the kids that I meet with, the families of the military men when I travel with USO, all of those lessons and things I learned through sport I kind of try to share with them.

**Q. This is your third year in St. Louis. The schedule is hectic; you come in and get out. Have you gotten to see any sights in St. Louis, Cardinals game, restaurants?**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: I'm actually going to be throwing out the first pitch on the 17th, on Saturday.

**Q. That will be fun.**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Yeah, I'm looking forward to that. It's going to be a lot of fun. I've thrown out a few pitches before, but never in St. Louis. I'm looking forward to that.

Then, you know, I've seen most of the city. I've seen the arch. You know, it's really pretty and nice. It's very chilled and laid back. I like that.

**Q. Let's talk about your city. Big-time celebrity moving to South Beach. Your thoughts on LeBron coming to the Heat?**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: It's amazing. Hopefully it will be a great season. They did well in 2006. It's kind of hard after winning the championship to maintain a certain level. But I think the team is looking amazing so far on paper and everything. Let's see how well they can get to know each other and hopefully create a great team.

**Q. We look forward to seeing you with Lindsay.**

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Me, too. I'm really looking forward to it.

ROSIE CREWS: Thank you all very much. Anna, thank you so much. We'll see you this weekend.

ANNA KOURNIKOVA: Thank you.

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