

Western & Southern Open

Monday, August 14, 2023

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Venus Williams

Press Conference



V. WILLIAMS/V. Kudrmetova

6-4, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Give us your initial thoughts after that match.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Just always happy to be back in Cincinnati. It's like my home away from home.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. It's already been a year of the comeback. Hamstring, knee. To put that together today...

VENUS WILLIAMS: I mean, it's just the first step in the tournament, and I'm looking for matches at this point to try to find some rhythm. It's not easy.

Definitely very challenging year with injuries. I'm just hoping for some luck. I got some today.

Q. A lot of coaches like to use the term "amnesia" for moving on to the next point, next play. How much did you have to just focus on the next point today being down early in both sets?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think at some point when you're down a double break, you start to think, well, I at least want to just hold serve for the rest of this set. Simple thoughts like that.

Then you get a little bit closer. You're, like, Okay, maybe I just want to win another point.

Definitely some big holes today that I usually don't play from. I'm usually ahead (smiling). So it was definitely different. But that's tennis. That's what's so exciting.

Q. In terms of the satisfaction of the win, I know it's a steppingstone for the next match, the next accomplishment, but what is the satisfaction that you get from today?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Definitely satisfaction from today is

just all the work that goes into just being here at all. Just, falling at Wimbledon was really, really shocking for me. I couldn't believe that happened, especially after all my injuries these past years. I was, like, How did this happen? That one was really tough for me.

So I'm really happy to be here, actually. I did my best to be here as soon as possible in the best form possible I could bring in that amount of time.

So that makes it satisfying, like, to be able to get a win with, like, very little time to prepare.

Q. You won your first match in Auckland, then the second match was close. You had your injury there.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah.

Q. Where do you feel like your level is here at this tournament, given that you started the year with an injury?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think I'm at a better level than I started the year, to be honest. I was actually worried about the rain delay, because I'm very traumatized by Auckland and all those rain delays and getting injured after that, like, cooling down and changing serves, going in. I'm, like, Oh, my God, I can't let that happen again to me.

I think my level is actually higher. My serve is better. Second serve was better. It's really about playing matches. You cannot replicate it. Especially after you take a large amount of time off. You cannot replicate it. You have to keep putting yourself in that position to just play.

So that's really where I am right now. I'm fine game-wise, but playing matches is a different ball game.

Q. Did you get your luggage back?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I finally did. I called every hour, like, I'd get off the phone and then I'd call right back and speak to another agent. I'm relentless. I needed my bags, and it was days of calling (smiling).



The day I played my match was the craziest day ever in terms of preparation. Like, there was none. I was running to buy clothes, and, you know, just all over the place. It was nuts.

You know, the package I had sent from Florida got stuck in customs. I thought I was going to have something. That didn't come. It was crazy, a crazy day.

But I have my clothes now. I'm grateful.

Q. Airline of choice, or...

VENUS WILLIAMS: Oh, it happens. I forgive and forget, yeah.

Q. You have described Cincinnati as a second home. There's talk that next year the tournament could be leaving Cincinnati. How do you feel about that, and would you like to see the tournament stay here?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yes, I would miss the memories; that's for sure. I love Midwest people. Some of the finest people on the planet. So I would miss that.

Obviously excited about anyone or any group that wants to invest in tennis in a big way, and moving it somewhere else would probably be an investment, and they are looking to grow the event and I would try to support that vision.

Q. You talked about the rehab from early in the year being one of the toughest that you have had in your career. Mentally, what has it been bouncing back from that, and...

VENUS WILLIAMS: Right. Well, after I did that injury in Auckland, I knew it was bad. Then I got an MRI the next day and I wasn't surprised that I was going to be out a while. I knew it was bad when I did it, especially walking off the court, I just knew.

So I actually didn't rehab for about two months, because I had already rehabbed a year before that. I always joke I'm a professional rehabber now, not a professional athlete. I needed a break from the rehab.

So I took a couple months off. I was in France and felt like I had a driver that went the wrong way, and I passed by the French Open. I was, like, Man, that looks fun.

I was in Paris, and I literally was digging up a racquet. Serena has a place there, and I looked and looked and looked and looked, and I finally found a racquet. I found her shoes. Her shoes had the soles taken out.

I'm, like, in these shoes. They're too big, with one racquet, and I'm trying to find string. I'm, like, Okay, I'm ready to do my rehab again (smiling).

So if I had not taken off that eight weeks, I probably could have made the French, but at some point you need a break from it. Constant rehab is very difficult work.

So right after Wimbledon, I went straight back to rehab. I felt like Amy Winehouse. I don't want to go. (Laughter.)

Q. You mention that story. You've been spending a lot of time in Europe, I feel like, this year, maybe more than in the past. You were in Amsterdam for a bit. You seemed to enjoy your time there. What was it about the city that seemed to speak to you?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I love Europe. I will be going back, God willing, after the Open. I just love being there. I have myself a good time and live my best life.

Nothing more to say than that. Over time you make friends, and that makes it even better.

Q. You mentioned on the court after the win, gosh, how cool it would be if Serena was here to see that one.

VENUS WILLIAMS: I know.

Q. Has she said anything to you? What did she have to say about it?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, she texted me after. She had a lot of encouraging words to say. She just is encouraging me to, you know, just to rise to be my best, because she believes in me and she knows what I have inside of me.

It's nice to have obviously her, because she knows and she knows what position I'm in and what it's like to be in this position. She knows what it's like to have something to give, but, like, you just need that opportunity.

So it's nice that she believes in me.

Q. You talk a lot about learning. You're the most experienced player on either tour, really. Talk about the satisfaction being able to step on court.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Right. Yeah, going back, like, you play the point, you're, like, Why did I choose that shot selection? I know better.

It's just learning, going back to matches. It's, like, Okay, next time I do that, I will do this, play better, and technical

things too. The things, the match, serving well. You know, like, I had a great service game at 5-All.

Last week I played in Montreal, got to 5-All, didn't have the greatest service game. So this week was better. It's step by step.

Unfortunately, with huge amounts of time off, that's just the price you have to pay. You have to learn again a lot of ways. Even though you know, when you're in the arena, it's a whole lot of other things.

Each time I play better. So I'm just telling everyone, Pray for me, pray for health, so I can keep stepping back into the arena (smiling).

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