

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

Elina Svitolina

Press Conference

E. SVITOLINA/S. Kuznetsova

7-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How happy are you to play a match like that, to be challenged the way that you were against Sveta and to come up with that good of tennis in your second match back?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Definitely very happy with the game tonight. It was a big fight. I was expecting the big battle, as always from her. She's a great fighter, and she never gives you easy matches.

Yeah, it was two good matches under my belt. Two players who have been training on clay actually, so that's kind of good for me, because it gives me confidence and I was feeling great tonight.

Q. In addition to that, there is a lot of nerves and insecurity going into a lot of players' first matches on the restart. So for you now, two matches into it, are you feeling like all the work that you put in on the practice court up until now and everything is there and that you're not far off from the level that you need to be for Paris and here in Rome, or do you still feel there is a bit of rust to knock off?

ELINA SVITOLINA: A little bit, I would say, a little bit of everything, because I think I have been playing some good matches. First round also was not easy. Second round, sorry. It was not easy, because I think it was two different players, and I got a little bit of, you know, tiebreak under pressure, these kind of points where I think I really was handling well.

For me was important just to focus on myself. For sure the focus will go away, and that's kind of normal. That's what I was expecting.

I think the most important these days is to expect that that stuff can happen. You cannot be perfect. I wouldn't say I was perfect before, but, I mean, you have to expect that



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with no crowd and kind of not playing for six months, anything can happen.

That's what I try to always expect unexpected and just be ready for everything what comes my way. And to be fair, I'm playing well. I'm feeling good.

I don't really remember how I was feeling before all the tour stopped. Right now I think I'm moving well, building a point quite good and been handling the under-pressure points quite good.

Q. Can you compare what it feels like right now to be playing to any other time in your career? You know, we are coming off a six-, seven-month break, obviously a global pandemic, no crowds, very, very different feel. Is there anything you can compare it to? Is it at all like how you guys start in January coming out of the off-season or is this just a very unique situation to you?

ELINA SVITOLINA: I would compare it to playing maybe a junior tournament. Not about the organization, because obviously the organization has been great and everything been really perfect and super safe. That's something you cannot compare.

But playing, like, with no people and feeling that you're alone, you know, when only your coach who is clapping when you're even playing an amazing point, that's kind of weird, I would say.

But then you get used to it, and, you know, I think having ball boys, linesmen, chair umpire, TV people kind of helps and puts you back on to, Okay, this is WTA Tour, you know, we are playing in Rome.

I mean, this is the situation it is right now, and to be fair, I'm very happy to having a chance to play. It's something really great, and I'm thankful for that. And especially for me to start my first tournament playing here in Rome where I have great memories. Yeah, I mean, I'm just happy the way it is.

Q. Looking ahead, you play either Vondrousova or Hercog, they are playing now. Can you talk about the potential challenge of playing either player?



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ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, I don't remember playing them, a match during any tournament. But I practice with them quite a few times. I know obviously we see each other. We know each other for many years.

I know the game style that they have. A little bit of different, I would say. I will have to just try to be focused on my own game. Is nothing really what else I have to do, you know, just to bring my best and try to recover as quick as possible, because today was quite physical match.

But in the end I think really helped me today to feel the court, to be in the competition mode, so, you know, in the end I'm looking forward to this, another challenge.

Q. Are you surprised at all having the break as long as it was since you played a competitive match that it's come back so quickly for you? Does that surprise you?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, not really, because I have been playing few matches. Not many, as I would say like Dominic Thiem, who played many, many matches before in...

Q. You didn't play 28 matches, no.

ELINA SVITOLINA: I didn't play 28 matches, no. I played exhibition. I played in Berlin where I had very good players with who I played.

And also I played one small tournament in Montreux, in Switzerland. Well, hopefully no one followed this one, because I lost. I was playing really bad.

You know, after I finished the tournament, I told Andy, We need to practice on clay, because I forgot how to play (smiling).

So that's kind of what pushed me to really practice and be really serious with my preparation, because I was, like, awful, you know. And especially with no people. I was, like, Maybe I need to stop this thing called tennis (smiling).

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