

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Thursday, 13 May 2021

Roma, Italia

Petra Martić

Press Conference

P. MARTIC/N. Podoroska

3-6, 6-1, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Can you just talk through today's match a little bit, what adjustments you feel like you were able to make in order to get that win.

PETRA MARTIC: Today was a tough one. I started slow again. The last couple of matches I started 3-Love, 4-Love down. That's definitely something I need to pay attention to, start the match a bit sharper from my side. I think it took my rhythm a bit too long. That was one thing I was not happy with today.

But I'm really proud with the way I picked up and I just kept on fighting. Even in the first set I thought I had some chances to get back in it fully. From the second set on, I feel like I played my best tennis so far this year.

Q. What do you think has been clicking, aside from the slow starts, this week in Rome?

PETRA MARTIC: Well, I really struggled the beginning of the season. I couldn't find my game from one day to another. I just felt like I wasn't improving, I wasn't feeling more comfortable on the court. It's a bad feeling, I have to say. You start to feel a bit hopeless.

I mean, I changed coaches. I started to work really hard. Not that I didn't work hard before that, but a different voice, different mind, different view on tennis. I feel like it all kind of brought something, it woke me up a little bit. I started to feel my game a bit more. From one match to another, I really feel like my game is coming along again. That's really good news for me.

Q. What has it been like to have not just a new voice but a very experienced voice with Francesca?

PETRA MARTIC: It's been great. When I was thinking of who I wanted next to me, she was the first name that I had in mind. She was such a good player, such a great fighter,



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so intense, so positive at the same time. Those were all the things that I want to be on the court. I thought I might as well have it next to me to give me the right example of how to be out there.

Her experience, just her belief in me, because she really believes in me as a player, she believes I can be even better than I am right now. Those things really mean a lot to you, especially when you struggle with confidence the way I did before prior to this tournament.

Q. About the origin of your partnership with Francesca, when did you first start thinking about it? Is Francesca your only coach at the moment? Will she be traveling with you for the rest of the season?

PETRA MARTIC: Yeah, after my loss in Miami I had to rethink my situation. I didn't play the way I wanted to. Things were not going my way. I really just started to think who I want to be my next coach. Like I said, I wanted someone who was an ex-player, someone who fought, who was positive, who just maybe even played similar to me, can understand my game really well. That was a struggle for me before with my previous coaches. That's how I came up with Francesca.

I called her up, and she was happy to take on this challenge, start working with me. So we started just before the clay court season started. This is our trial period. But I really hope that we are going to continue throughout.

Q. Would you say you've been able to make a few discoveries about your game that you didn't know before, learn something new with Francesca?

PETRA MARTIC: I think I knew my game. I've always known my game pretty well. It was just more of getting my confidence back, pointing out the things I do well on court.

I feel like when you struggle with confidence, you also forget things you do really well on court. Those are the things you need to realize, especially in those tough moments.

She was there to really keep reminding me of you serve really well, you do this really well, like believe that, trust that, trust your game. Yeah, first two tournaments on clay it was still a bit of a struggle. Looks like here things really

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started, yeah, getting together.

Q. Would you say it feels like a complete turnaround? Do you feel like you're kind of born again in this season with three consecutive wins in Rome?

PETRA MARTIC: Yeah, I mean, it's really been a while since I felt this way. I'm starting to feel like I felt when I played my best tennis basically before corona hit.

I don't want to look too far ahead. I want to enjoy these three wins. Still not done here. I still want to keep on going. At the same time I want to take it one day at a time and really just enjoy this progress.

Q. Looking ahead a little bit to Pegula. Talk about the challenge. You played maybe once before.

PETRA MARTIC: Yeah, we played a long time ago on clay actually. Actually 2019 I think in Charleston. It was three sets, really tough match. I mean, she's really confident this year. She's played so well. I think the surface right now doesn't matter for her.

Like I did up until now, I have to focus on my game. That's one thing that we really tried to focus on when it comes to me a lot, not pay attention to what's on the other side.

I'm playing well. She's playing well, as well. It's going to be a good battle, I'm sure.

Q. We only know Francesca from the journalist side. She always gave great interviews, sounded like Yoda, just wisdom all the time, chilled out. Is that also the dynamic you get being her pupil? What are the key phrases or messages she tries to get through to you?

PETRA MARTIC: One thing is for sure, I'm a bit of a perfectionist, so she tries to calm me down, chill. You don't need an extra shot on the practice. Trust what you have, it's going to be fine.

She's on one hand very intense and she wants to work hard, and we do work hard, but at the same time she wants me to kind of steer away a little bit from that perfectionism that I have tendency to.

She's balancing me out. It's really nice to have that calm next to you when you feel like the nerves are getting to you. That's really big for me.

Q. Do you have recollections 11 years ago of Francesca's Roland Garros title? Was that an inspiring moment?

PETRA MARTIC: Definitely. Just to see her win that tournament, I actually followed it back then, watched her matches. To me it was just so impressive the way she fought on the court, how she played with her heart.

That's one thing that's how I want to play. That was one of the reasons why I really wanted her next to me, wanted her to coach me and to guide me and to help me bring that out, to be as close to it as possible.

Q. Do you think you might start kissing the court?

PETRA MARTIC: That's what I'm working for. I guess we'll see.

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