

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

Elena Rybakina

Press Conference



E. RYBAKINA/V. Azarenka

6-4, 0-6, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Elena, you're into your second straight Miami Open final. What is it about this tournament that brings out some of your best tennis, do you think?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, honestly, I don't know. Last year it was different conditions. I was coming from Indian Wells, a lot of wins.

This year it's much different. I was not expecting honestly to be in the final, because I was not prepared that well for this tournament. But really happy that I managed to battle through all these matches and be in the final again.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Congratulations on a tremendous, tremendous victory out there.

ELENA RYBAKINA: Thank you.

Q. It's 5-4, you're trying to serve the match out. Tremendous game. You're broken. She is rallying the crowd. It felt like there was going to be a momentum shift. You did not flinch. How did you keep it all together at that point?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, yeah, I had similar situation with Maria, also new balls, and I was serving for the match. I made it with her, but I knew that sometimes it's not going to go the same.

I was trying of course to focus on the serve, but she was reading the serve well and returning these couple of longer rallies.

Well, I was just trying to keep on fighting, and of course she had also this momentum. The whole match we were both fighting. I knew that in the tiebreak the only chance for me to win is just to switch off my mind and just try to go for it.

I served really well. I think it was almost all the serve from the first one. Really happy that I managed to start the tiebreak better, and it just went well in the end.

Q. This was I think your first deciding set tiebreaker since you played one in Australia...

ELENA RYBAKINA: Okay.

Q. ...that few of us will ever forget, I think. Did that tiebreaker flash through your mind at all?

ELENA RYBAKINA: No.

Q. Did you think at all about...

ELENA RYBAKINA: Honestly, no, I didn't even remember that last time I played in Australia, the tiebreak, but definitely, I mean, all the matches I played here, it was a battle for every point with all the opponents.

I was not really thinking much. I knew it's a tiebreak, it's a kind of roulette, it might not go your way, especially from the beginning, and it went my way. Really happy for that.

Q. Just what does that mean when you say "switch your mind off" ? How do you experience that and how do you do it? Because I can't.

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, of course I was a little bit nervous because I knew it's a chance for me. Same as it was with Maria with new balls. I had really good serve and now I had to bring it up.

She did couple of serves, it didn't go my way, so of course I was a little bit upset and I knew it's gonna be again tough games. I was just thinking that, okay, now I'm going for it no matter what's gonna happen. That's how it finished (smiling).

Q. Congratulations. I want to ask about what's coming next. You're facing two very strong players. I want to ask how do you analyze them?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, honestly didn't think yet about



this match. I know that they both playing really well now this tournament and both very aggressive, so there is no really long rallies.

For this kind of game, I need to be prepared physically, to also push myself, have a good serve. First few balls I need to be very fast, which, I mean, is going to be for sure difficult for me physically, but we see who is going to win in the end, and I will try to prepare and do my best in final, of course.

Q. I think in the last two seasons you have kind of over time said how important the preparation aspect is for you before tournaments, if you can go into an event feeling you have done the whole block and everything, that your confidence is really high. Knowing you came in here a little bit underprepared but scrapping out these wins, how much does these two weeks mean to you? Or have you learned kind of the type of result you can still get even when things are just not as perfect as you would want them to be before the tournament?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, of course it's a lot about the decisions on the court, but I'm just really proud how mentally I could still push myself even though it was really difficult from the beginning.

For sure I can take a lot from this tournament, a lot of positive. And also, in the beginning, these long matches were helping me to get back in shape. Now I'm not in shape just because I'm tired of all these long matches, but overall, it was really successful tournament no matter how I do in the final.

Q. I want to go back to the match against Sakkari and how tough it was for both of you physically, but tell us a little bit more about that match and how you feel today after going through what you have gone through?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, it was really tough match against Maria. Happy that I had day also off to recover. I knew that today it might go longer, and I was expecting it's gonna be tough match.

But with Maria, as I said, I took the chances as soon as I get it with new balls. I served really well that game and the match was finished. But here it was different story, and as I said, tiebreak, it's a little bit of roulette, and you never know who starts good and how it's going to end up.

But I'm happy it went my way. Sometimes on the tournaments you need to be lucky, and I think this tournament I'm a little bit luckier than maybe usual because

I had so many tough matches three sets.

So I'm taking all the chances I can, and hopefully, as I said, I will do my best in the final.

Q. You seem to have an unbelievably good demeanor on the court. Not too high, not too low. You don't show any emotion to your opponent. I think you model yourself in part, I think you've said you liked Roger Federer, but do you think that gives you an advantage that you're not showing your opponent how you're feeling? And how do you do that?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I think it's just the character, but also if sometimes you can notice that I'm also negative. Of course I need to maybe bring more positive energy and to show the opponent. But I think this tournament, as I said, it's just such difficult for me physically that the only thing I was thinking not to be negative, because first matches I was a little bit.

Now I knew that I cannot lose energy on these kind of things. I was just trying to keep calm and just focus on every point, because I knew that's the only way to get through this.

Q. Is there a hard court in the sport that suits your game better than this one, or is this the best one for your game, do you think?

ELENA RYBAKINA: You mean the hard court?

Q. No, in hard courts, but this surface, this one in Miami.

ELENA RYBAKINA: Miami.

Q. The speed. Is there any one that's better for you?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Honestly, even coming to this tournament, I was saying that this is not the maybe best hard court and this is not the courts I feel the best. It was the same last year when I came from Indian Wells. It was a lot of tough matches.

I was coming with a lot of wins, but also, from the beginning, it was very difficult for me to play here. And the same this year. So I won't say that this is the best hard court feeling for me.

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