

BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, October 9, 2021

Ajla Tomljanovic

Press Conference



A. TOMLJANOVIC/G. Muguruza

6-3, 1-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Ajla, can you talk us through your match today.

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, I felt like coming in I was actually really excited to play her because she beat me last few times. One of those times was really close. I felt like I had my chances.

I was feeling really good here my first round so I thought I could really put up a good fight today. Despite losing the second set, I always felt like if I start well and kind of get ahead, I'd give myself opportunities. I'm very happy that this time around I took them and ended up with the win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What pleases you the most or what are you most proud of about today's win?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: I get really happy when I get into these moments where I get nervous and I manage to stay calm and focus on just what's on the task. Even when I have in the past missed my chances or had really tough losses against the top players, you're like, Well, okay, I'm going to learn from it. But the next time you're in the same position, it's never really the same. It's always a new moment. But you can take the lessons before and apply it.

The fact that it's always new, in that moment you have to problem solve.

I'm just happy that I kind of took everything I could from all the losses before and just did kind of my best to react in a way that will benefit me.

I knew that I could have, again, lost, putting myself in good situations. But I'm going out there knowing that I'm capable and that I can come up with the goods when it matters.

Q. What were you telling yourself? What do you think was the key today of keeping yourself on an even

keel?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, I just felt like when I broke to go up 5-3, I just thought to myself to make her work for her to hold, even if it goes to 5-4, just to remember that she's the one that's now in a tough spot, not the other way around.

Sometimes you can be the one to feel pressure that you need to close it out. No, actually you need one game and she needs four to win the match. Just kind of tricking my brain to stay in the moment. Yeah, just finding ways where I put myself in a position that really helps me instead of not.

Q. Going into the match you said you'd lost to her a few times, three straight times that you've lost to her, did that enter your mind at all or what's in the past is in the past and everything is fresh?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: No, I definitely did think about it. But I just took all the positives, all the things I could use for this match. I also did remember that I did beat her once a long time ago, and that gave me confidence that I could do it again.

There was a few close ones we had that didn't go my way, but just knowing her game and what she can do and what I can do, that helped me going in there, again where I put myself in a position that I'm the underdog, but I 100% believe that I can win.

Q. Next up for you is Zidensek. What are your thoughts on that one?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, I think I've played her a few times in the past. Not this year. But she's been having a great year. I'm expecting her to play really well, like she has been. I think the matchup here. I don't mind. I'm pretty excited for it because I'm feeling good. There's no reason why I shouldn't put a good performance in on Monday.

Q. Two matches you played so far, one at night, one during the day. Is there a preference? Is one any more comfortable than the others with conditions?



AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: No, I really enjoyed the conditions at night. The only thing I don't like about it, I don't like waiting that long to play. In the end, like, the first match you got to wake up a little earlier. Once it gets to 11:00, I'm happy I'm first on.

Just for that I prefer to go on a little bit earlier.

Q. Have you put in a request for the next round to do that?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: No. I'll just deal with whatever comes my way.

Q. How do you occupy the time when you play later in the day?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, it's not easy for me. I've been doing this for a while. I kind of set myself, okay, until I start warming up for even my warmup, I try to disconnect and not think about it too much. Once I get to the site, once it's getting closer, I kind of set apart the time where I'm going to talk about the match and know what I'm doing. After that I'll let my thoughts kind of settle.

I keep thinking about it once it's that close. There's not much I can do about it. It also keeps me on my toes. It's more about that time beforehand to not really just overthink it, which sometimes I can do.

Q. Kind of a weird question. You're a player that is so talented, has been on our radar for so long. There's a difference between being a younger and older player. You're a player that talks about confidence, about sometimes not believing in yourself as you should, struggling with the self-belief. Where do you think that struggle comes from? Do you think it's innate? Your time on the tour has led to this?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: That's a good question.

So I think I'm a big thinker. I will overthink even the smallest things, which sometimes works for me and other times it doesn't. On top of that I just want it so much a lot of the times. There's, like, that little kid in me that all I wanted to ever do was play tennis and win.

Sometimes it's hard to accept the losses and it's hard to accept that maybe where I thought I'd be, I didn't hit those marks. It kind of builds in my mind that I kind of failed. Then I want it even more.

I get into situations when it's, like, really within my reach. It's tennis, it happens, you don't always win. I sometimes

make it bigger than it is.

Now that I'm a little bit older and I'm making runs that I haven't before, it also makes me appreciate it a lot more. It makes me think, Why wasn't I happier when I was 20, 21 making the fourth round of the French? That was awesome. Back then, you're just younger, you take it differently.

I think it's always going to be a learning process for me. It never comes easily. But it's definitely so worth it when I do get it right because like even when I'm playing well, I'm always ready for anything.

I'm just learning how to relax and stay competitive, but without having that added pressure from myself because it can be a curse a little bit. I'm happy that I still want it as much as I do because it's what keeps me going.

Q. Do you feel you're breaking apart that scar tissue, mental scar tissue, that can build up over time as those struggles mount up? Do you feel there was a big breakthrough this year with it?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: I think what's been really helpful this year is I've just accepted that whatever happens happens and I have to move on and then try again. I don't try to dwell on the past or on the losses too long. Every tournament I take just as a new tournament. Happy to be even able to play.

It gets lost sometimes. We do this for a living, every week in and out. I mean, what are we doing? It's my passion to play tennis. I'm making a living out of it. When you look at it that way, I'm like, Wow, I should really enjoy this way more. And I am.

But the competitiveness and the losses sometimes get a little heavy. Just simplifying it, always moving forward, taking the loss on the chin and learning from it, believing that my time will come, that's what kind of keeps me going.

Q. Have you tried to speak with a sports psychologist to get over the hurdles? How do you deal with the frustration of being in those situations?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: I am working with a psychologist. She's not exactly a sports psychologist. She's more general. I've been working for a year now with her. I really do like it. I do believe that that can help a lot.

Sorry, what was the second part of the question?

Q. How do you get over those frustrations?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: I keep in mind that we all deal with it. Everyone in this tournament, we all go through the same emotions. The one that comes out on top is the one that gets over it as quickly as possible, but still takes the lessons out of it.

Positivity, it's so cliché, but it speeds up everything, everything bad happening in your life. I'm learning to do that. Also when I'm not really feeling like doing something, I also need to step back and say, You know what, I'm going to take a week off because this is just not working right now.

Just learning what to do in certain moments is really I think key for me at this stage in my career.

Q. Are you really too hard on yourself? Raducanu said she needs to cut herself a little bit of slack. Do you think you need to apply that to yourself?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, like I said, it's a blessing and a curse. It's what drives me to be better, but it's also what kicks me when I'm already down. Sometimes it keeps me there longer than I want to be.

I try really hard not to be that hard on myself and give myself more credit. I did read some of Emma's quotes. I think for an 18-year-old to say that, she has a really good way she looks at it. What she's done is unbelievable. I've read it. I thought to myself, I can even apply to that even if I'm 28.

Q. (Question regarding scheduling.)

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: I just can feel it. Like when it feels a little too hard to go to practice, I'm like, Okay, maybe I take a few days off. I never want to get to the stage where I'm really burned out. It happened to me last year. It sometimes delays the process even more when you try to push through something that just should be left alone.

This year after the Open, I didn't play. I said, Okay, I'm actually going to take, like, a week off, not hit as much just to refresh my mind and be hungry now for these tournaments. Maybe in the past I would chase something that shouldn't be chased, think the more that I play, the better I'll get quicker.

It's not really the case, at least with me. So just being okay with taking a moment to breathe and not play has been beneficial for the rest of the year.

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