

BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, October 10, 2021

Leylah Fernandez

Press Conference



L. FERNANDEZ/A. Pavlyuchenkova

5-7, 6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Please walk us through the match, how you performed tonight.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Well, tonight was definitely a very tough match. Anastasia, she's a great player. She's a fighter. She's aggressive. It was a good fight.

I did not play my best tennis, made a few mistakes here and there, and she took advantage of it. I was glad I was able to fight back in the second set and figure a way to get the ball back in one more time, take my chances when I got them.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How were you able to use expressing yourself more on court tonight?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Just kind of looking at my box, hearing them cheer me on, it definitely helped me to kind of stay focused, just look at the positive, keep figuring things out.

I am a person who is an introvert, likes puzzles. I like figuring things out, Sudoku, Rubik's cubes, figuring out of problems.

Tonight was another problem I had to solve. I was glad I was able to get through it.

Q. Can you describe the difference in your level of calm when you walk on a court against a good opponent, get yourself in trouble, compared to earlier in the season when the serve toss was flying? What do you attribute that to if there is a difference in that mindset?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I feel like the mindset is still the same. I'm still going out there wanting to win, going for my shots, for everything. In the beginning of the year when the toss was going a little bit everywhere, I was patient.

The funny thing is when we went back home to practice the serve, my dad just said, We're going to play soccer. We did not hit a serve for, like, three days. We threw the football, threw tennis balls around, seeing who's going to hit the target. That really helped me to calm myself and just have fun, not really overthinking it.

Every time that I'm on court and the pressure is going up, I just think back to that moment, and it always brings a smile to my face, calms me down. Just want to be a little kid who want to be playing in a park once again. That just helps a lot.

Q. You've improved a lot of things since that time. What do you think is the biggest technical or tactical improvement you made that comes in handy in those tough moments?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think it's more the mental aspect. I feel like I'm a little bit more confident with myself, with my game, that I'm trusting it a lot more than before. If it goes in, it goes in. If it goes out, then I just try to move on and figure it out once again.

I think it's the mental aspect of trusting myself has improved a lot.

Q. What adjustments did you make in the second set? What did you feel you were able to do to shift things on your terms?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Well, tonight I wasn't playing my best tennis. The funny thing is I was only thinking of, like, getting the ball back in as much as possible. I did not care if it was the ugliest shot in the world, I just wanted to put it in. And I did.

I think she started making a few mistakes. I noticed that. I tried to impose my game a little bit more. It definitely helped.

We had this little saying, my dad and I, a few years ago that we got to win ugly, doesn't matter what the circumstances are. I think that just brought me back to that

time and it definitely helped me tonight.

Q. That's the second or third time you said tonight that you didn't think you played very well. Most people watching would disagree. What was your frustration with your game?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think the whole game maybe technically I was a little uncomfortable. Tonight wasn't the best feeling ball-wise. She was hitting well her targets. I was missing them by maybe an inch or two. That definitely made a difference in the first set.

I'm not going to be playing my best tennis all the time. I know where my level is at during trainings, I know what I can produce on court. I'm always hard on myself, which is good and bad. I'm learning to kind of accept the good and the bad, seeing what I can improve on.

That's what's important right now, that I know I can do a lot better, and I know tomorrow is going to be a new day a new match, new training session so I can get better for my next match.

Q. How are you approaching the preparation for the match against Shelby?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Again, Shelby, I've played against her last year. It was definitely a good match. I had a lot to learn from that loss. The few days that we're going to play, it's going to be a tough battle. Tomorrow I'm just going to talk with my coach, with my dad, to see what I can improve, what I can do, what will be the game plan, just try to execute it from there.

Q. What adjustments have you been making on this surface?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I would say staying a little bit more patient. It is definitely slower than New York. I'm adjusting pretty well. I know that the ball is going to come back one way or another, so I just got to be ready for the ball to bounce in. I have to be patient, have to fight to get that ball inside the court to make my opponents uncomfortable. Just being patient and wait for the right moment to hit a winner or be aggressive.

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