

BNP Paribas Open

Thursday, March 16, 2023

Elena Rybakina

Press Conference



E. RYBAKINA/K. Muchova

7-6, 2-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Tell us how you feel getting through what was a really quality match.

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, it was really tough match today, but in the end, happy that I managed to win in these tough conditions. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Can you just talk about the adjustments that you made in that third set. It seemed like you almost decided you were just going to hit a little bit bigger down the stretch. Talk about the adjustments you had to make in the match.

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, well, I didn't start the match so good. I was a bit low on energy. Didn't move that well. Didn't serve also. So it was already struggle from the beginning.

Also, Karolina, she played really well, she was opening the court and using these slow conditions. It was difficult for me to get free points.

Yeah, it was tough first set, so in the second, it was difficult to keep the level. I dropped and lost three games really quick. So of course after I start to feel the rhythm again, but it was already too late for the second set.

In the third, I just knew that I have to push more, try to focus on every point. Yeah, just somehow to raise my energy. In the end it was really close also the third set.

Q. What's your favorite kind of point to win on? Obviously a double fault is not a fun point to win a match on. Is an ace especially satisfying? What do you like?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, when I had first two match points, it was like on these courts I knew that it's gonna be not easy to even finish the match, because everything can

happen. We were playing this game very long. I knew that just the next game I'm serving, it's advantage and I need just to push more in the first serve to get this first serve so I can build the point.

Yeah, I'm just happy that in the end I managed to win the match with an ace, for sure.

Q. An extension of that question actually, I've noticed that when you're at the net you seem quite comfortable. You seem like you enjoy it up there. Is that true? Would you like to be at the net more often?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, I won't say that I'm that confident to be at the net just because it's also depends on which ball I can. I would say that on this I need still to work a lot, and for sure I need to come more often to the net, especially when the conditions are that slow. Because on the baseline, it's not easy to finish the rally.

Q. Iga is going to be your next opponent. She just finished the quarterfinal. I want to get your thoughts on the matchup, and if you think maybe it would be a little bit more challenging because of the surface here at Indian Wells.

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, for sure it's gonna be different than in Australia. Before match in Australia, we played also many times. For sure it's gonna be tough match.

I'm gonna try to recover and prepare for this one, and, yeah, try my best.

Q. Do you have to go into a match with her with any different strategy than you would with anybody else?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I would say there is things, of course, which I'm doing like with opponent, preparing for each opponent, but overall my game is to be aggressive. As I said, here it's not easy, but I still have to stick to this game plan, and then try to prepare, to think also with my coaches what we can do here.

Yeah, and just try my best in the end. Physically I need to be ready, for sure.



Q. Could you talk about the Australian win, beating the No. 1 player in straight sets. What did you feel coming off of that match? If you could, secondly, if you could just say for you the one or two biggest challenges in Iga's game, please.

ELENA RYBAKINA: I would say that for sure Iga, she's a big fighter, she moves really well on court. I think physically she's one of the best for now. It's not easy against her, because you feel that every point is gonna be tough. She's very consistent also.

In Australia I just know that when I went to play against her, I had really nothing to lose. She's No. 1 and kind of pressure on her in that moment.

I knew the game plan, I knew how I have to play, and in the end, I did well. So we see how it's gonna go tomorrow, but I think I have chances, of course, if I'm physically ready. Yeah, we'll see.

Q. Do you still feel that way, that you have nothing to lose because she's No. 1, or has the psychology shifted because you defeated her last time?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I'm trying not to think about this, just because, as I said, it's different conditions. It's also depends a lot how physically I feel, like I'm kind of realistic in these things. I know that, of course, if I am gonna bring my best tomorrow, there is chances that I'm gonna win.

If it's gonna be a bit of a drop like today, maybe in the second set when it was very quick, first three games of the second set, then of course the chances are less just because she's No. 1 and she's very consistent, so there is not many margin to mistakes, I will say.

Q. It's your first WTA 1000 semifinal, because I forgot that Dubai was a 500 that year, but how does it feel to be able to get that result again early in this year? Also just on Muchova a little bit, what makes her so tricky as an opponent?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I think she's very talented player. She has very good hands. When I played her in 2019, I actually thought that she's gonna go up even more. But I guess she was unlucky with injuries, because she didn't play a long time.

But I think that if she's keep on playing like this, for sure she's gonna be much better with ranking in the next few weeks, months, because she has game at the net and pretty good serve. She's moving the ball well, opening the court.

So it's not easy to play against her (smiling).

Q. While you have been here in California, has there been one thing that was fun or different or unusual, anything that was special?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I won't say that, because honestly I cannot say that here it's a lot to do in the sense of everything you want to see or to do something, you need to go pretty far. It takes time. While you're in tournament, you cannot do much of this, just because you need to recover and rest.

So we see, maybe I will have some time after the tournament.

Q. How much better would you say you are defensively and movement-wise than you were maybe a couple years ago?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I think slowly I'm getting better, but it's not something to change really quick. Because also I think after every preseason I'm getting better, but then is the question also to keep this level, to be consistent, not to get injured.

Yeah, I think for sure it's getting better, but there is still a lot in front to work on.

Q. What's the best part of what you do? What do you enjoy the most?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, probably win the rallies when the rallies are a bit shorter (smiling).

No, I mean, my aggressive game. And for sure I feel very confident when my serve is going. And since it's not that easy for me to come forward, I would say that I'm still kind of struggling with that. If I do it well, of course this is the most enjoyable moments.

Q. But I'm not talking just about how you play. I'm talking about everything involved in your career.

ELENA RYBAKINA: In what way?

Q. Is it the food that you experience somewhere? Is it the people that you meet places? Is it the sights that you may get to see, or just the whole aspect of the life that you lead?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, for sure it's very interesting. It's tough life, but the same time it's interesting because you meet a lot of people. If you have time, of course you

can see a lot in these different countries, cities. To see different cultures or all of this is very interesting, enjoyable, but the same time not easy if we talk about traveling.

So there is always good things and maybe tough, yeah.

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