

Porsche Tennis Grand Prix

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Elise Mertens

Press Conference

E. MERTENS/T. Maria

6-1, 4-6, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on your first win in Stuttgart. Can you let us know your feelings after the match.

ELISE MERTENS: Yeah, so it is actually my first win, but I have only been here twice (smiling). Yeah, I mean, it was kind of an unorthodox match. Of course playing against her is always a bit tricky. Actually it was my first time playing against her, but of course I have seen her around. I know her a little bit.

Yeah, first set, I mean, I was dominating. Everything went a bit my way. Then of course, like tennis is, players are going to try to adjust a little bit, which she did. All credits to her for winning that second set.

Yeah, a bit too passive on my side, but I felt like in the third set I started to dominate again, tried to go a little bit to the net because I'm also comfortable there too, so it gave me an advantage.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Do you feel as though with your level, maybe not just results-wise but at least level in the way you're playing, that you are trending up? Are you feeling like things are on the right way?

ELISE MERTENS: I think so. Of course I can always do things better. I can always work on things. But I feel like I'm pretty steady at the moment.

Having some tough draws, of course, in the past, but I can only learn from these matches. Of course I'm 28, so I'm not the younger ones, but I still feel like, okay, tennis gives me a lot and I have a lot of passion for tennis. I always try to improve, and I think that's my work ethic, just try to improve every time. I think that's why I'm still there in the ranking.



Q. Did you expect such consistency from Tatjana in the second set, or did her game surprise you or not surprise?

ELISE MERTENS: The game did not surprise me, because of course I look at matches too before I play her. But I knew it was going to be a tough match, especially playing here in Stuttgart in her country.

But yeah, she's a very experienced player, very tricky player, so you never know what you're going to get. So all credits to her for getting that second set, and I think it's never easy. Also first matches are never easy. We have to get a little bit used to the court. But it did not surprise me, but I knew it was going to be difficult.

Q. It seemed like she's obviously got this slice-and-dice approach. You went a lot more to her backhand, it seemed to me. She seemed to have a lot more height on the slice on the backhand, and it did look to me as though a tactic of yours was to at least tend towards that side. Could you talk about that a bit?

ELISE MERTENS: Yeah, for me, I don't mind if people play dropshots or slice or high balls or any kind of ball. I'm kind of like, okay, this is different, this is nice too. I'm embracing the challenge. So I kind of played the dropshot too and the slice and then coming to the net.

Yeah, her backhand slice, yes, it floated a little bit more than her forehand. I feel like on the forehand side she can really get that fast slice in. So I felt like, yeah, maybe approach a bit more on the backhand side. But also felt like my backhand down the line sometimes worked really well.

So I think I just had to, also third set again, work a bit more, like, dominate a bit more from my side and what I have to do and what I can improve.

Q. You mentioned being 28. To be clear, that's still very, very, very young.

ELISE MERTENS: I know (smiling).



Q. Just making sure. But what is the biggest difference you feel being on tour at 22 versus being on tour at this point at 28?

ELISE MERTENS: I think it's more like the experience. You have been to a lot of places already. If you do really well, you go to the same places every year, which I like, of course, the conditions.

But also you feel less stressed. I felt like when I was 20 years old, I felt like I need to win this one, I need to win this, I need to win this match, because if I lose, two losses in a row, something like that, just panicking a bit more. I feel like now, okay, I lost the second set, but I can do it again. This is a new set, new match.

But yeah, I think it's more relaxed. Sometimes I'm a bit stressy too, of course. I think it's more, like, okay, trust yourself a bit more what I can do as a tennis player.

Q. Next round you play against 22-years-old Iga.

ELISE MERTENS: Yeah (smiling).

Q. What is your plan?

ELISE MERTENS: My plan? Of course I'm going to look at a bit of her matches in the past. I actually haven't played her yet in singles. I played her once in doubles in Indian Wells with Su-Wei still on my side. Yeah, yeah, it's been some years.

But yeah, I think I just have to dominate a little bit, go into the court, not hesitate at all, because she will get that ball back. She will hit the ball. Of course she has a lot of experience on these courts already, winning it twice.

Yeah, let's see what I can do against her. In tennis, you never know.

Q. On Iga, obviously you'll watch tape tonight, but you have seen her play passively, actively, however, but what stands out to you? I mean, you have never played her across the net in singles, but what stands out to you as kind of being what makes her difficult and why she's been able to kind of have the consistent success that she has?

ELISE MERTENS: At age of 22, it's unbelievable what she's already achieved. Definitely in the future, too, she will achieve a lot more.

But yeah, the mental toughness, I think, and not giving any points away, taking the ball on the rise, taking it early. And her footwork of course, too.

She's a bit like an all-court, all-around player, so you don't really find a lot of weaknesses. Yeah, I think of course that's why she's No. 1.

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