

Porsche Tennis Grand Prix

Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Germany

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Elena Rybakina

Press Conference

E. RYBAKINA/I. Swiatek

6-3, 4-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Elena, congratulations. You're into your first final here in Stuttgart. Talk us through that match, because it was quite epic.

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, it was very tough match, like always, against Iga. Really happy that I won on clay. Gives confidence, of course.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. I felt that probably you weren't very pleased with the way you were serving in the first couple of matches played here. Today you had 10 aces. What was the thoughts on your serve today?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, I was serving much better today, I think just because also you play against such a good player that you know that every point counts, and I was pushing myself.

First two matches I was adapting a bit to the conditions, to the balls, and maybe I was serving a little bit more passive. Today I was going for the serve, was trying to change it a little bit. So, yeah.

Q. I'd also like to talk to you about your return today, which I thought maybe that's the best you have returned certainly this tournament? I thought your return was amazing today. Can you tell us a bit about that?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I think the return definitely improved from last year from both angles, and of course it depends on the opponent, a bit of the speed of the serve, and of course placement.

But, yeah, since we played with Iga many times, more or less I try to predict where she's going to go, and really happy with the return and overall with the game.

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Q. What was going through your mind as she's saving all of these breakpoints throughout the second set and a little bit in beginning of the third? I mean, was there frustration? Did you have to tamp it down? Because one of those breaks goes your way, it's probably a straight-set win. How do you maintain your focus?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, of course I was a bit frustrated, but the same time, Coach also was telling me and I was trying to calm down because it's clay and it doesn't mean anything, and she has very good second serve, good spin, so it pushes you out of the court so it's not easy to step in.

Also at these moments, I think it's normal to be also a bit tight. She was serving well. I mean, a bit of frustration was there, but in the end of the day, I found my way.

Q. Sometimes we all need a certain goal or reason to do something. I trust one, if you won the car, would that be the key to go for that driver license or the other way around? Why did you do it so far?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I wanted to do it already long time, but I never have chance to be at one place for long. I did already couple of lessons. I was driving, but yeah, for sure that's the goal for this year outside of the court.

And with this car, if I win, it's going to be one double goal. Hopefully I finish it this year (smiling).

Q. Was it even more difficult to play Iga here, knowing that she hasn't lost a match at this tournament?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, of course. For me last two times I was coming, it was not that successful, the tournament. I was playing Fed Cup, also traveling a lot. But this time I prepared much better.

Of course she likes the courts. For me, it's a bit difficult to move. It's really slippery and you need to be very strong.

For now I'm happy that I managed to pull off these three matches, and even today this three-set battle I managed to win.

Q. You are one of Iga's most uncomfortable

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opponents. What gives you this advantage in matches against her? The tournament magazine named you as a player with a poker face. Maybe this one?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I think it's just style of the game. Iga, she moves really well and she likes to dominate in the rally. With me, it's difficult because I play fast, I play flatter, and also like to move the opponent.

So it's kind of, I think, matchup where we are both pushing each other, both trying to dominate in the point. So I think of course also my serve helps a lot. That's why some matches I win; some matches I lose. But it's always tough for her to play against me and for me to play against her (smiling).

Q. I always like to know do people have a connection to Germany. So do you have any relationship to German culture, sports, anything, or did you even learn German at school, something like that?

ELENA RYBAKINA: No, I never learned German in school. In school it was actually French for me (smiling).

Germany I remember I played my first juniors events, and this is where I actually met my sponsor, Yonex. From there, when I was 13 I think I'm playing Yonex racquets, so these kind of memories from Germany.

Q. Fifth final of the year. You lead the tour in wins, finals, all that, and we're only in April. You have beaten No. 1, No. 2. You're the only player to do that this year. Do you feel like you are the best player on tour right now?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, I'm happy, of course, with all the tournaments I just played and all the finals. As I was saying last year, because I started really well the season, and now it's also successful, the season is very long, and you never know how you're gonna finish, but of course I'm happy with all the results I'm having this year.

Q. I have to ask about tomorrow. Obviously you'll face either Marketa or Marta. What do you make of those matchups coming off of, you know, the matchup you just had against Iga?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, Iga, of course, very tough opponent. It gives confidence, but the same time, I know that if it's gonna be Marta, for example, she has nothing to lose. She comes, she's gonna swing, and she moves really well. So she already beat good players. So if it's gonna be her, it's gonna be tough one, for sure.

And same with Marketa. I feel like she was doing well this

tournament, and she's lefty, so it's a little bit different, so I will need to adjust to a different spin and also speed of the ball.

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