

China Open

Monday, October 2, 2023

Beijing, China

Elena Rybakina

Press Conference



E. RYBAKINA/Zheng Qinwen

6-1, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: The match itself seemed to be a quick one, quite successful for you. How do you see it yourself?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I think I played really well today. I started the match good. I know that maybe for Qinwen it was a bit difficult because she also just finished Asian Games. I think overall it was a really good match from me.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. In terms of how well you served today, you were protecting that particularly well, how you find the conditions in your practices, court speed-wise, how well the ball is reacting with the court on your serve and big forehand?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I think, of course, the courts outside and practice courts are a bit different from center court. I also needed some time to get used to it.

I think it's actually not that fast here. The ball's a bit heavier. I went to Tokyo and I did some practices there, of course, and it was different conditions.

I'm happy that I had extra days to practice here. I was feeling the ball well.

Q. Compare your last meeting in Wimbledon last year, it was a close match, what will you rate her performance tonight? More about you or more about her?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I think she didn't start the match so good, was not high percentage from the first serve, so it was easier for me to maybe step in and put pressure.

I think still from the grass to hard court, it's a lot different the conditions, different approach to the game. I think it's just difficult to compare these two matches.

Q. Everyone has the opportunity for the first round because it's going to be tough for both players. How do you manage to make your game today get very smooth?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, first matches, they're always difficult. Last match I played was at US Open, so I was kind of a bit nervous more because I didn't have so many matches in the past few weeks.

I was feeling well on the practices. I was just trying to focus point by point, focus on my serve, which doesn't affect by the opponent.

Yeah, I started pretty well the match, so it gave me big confidence for the whole game.

Q. I've been asking a lot of players about who has the best serve on tour. Your name comes up quite a bit from your colleagues.

ELENA RYBAKINA: Okay (smiling).

Q. Can you talk a little bit about that shot, how different it is today compared to maybe four or five years ago? What is it that you're most proud of with respect to what your serve can do?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, by the statistics I'm serving pretty well already second year in a row. We work quite a lot with the coach. I cannot say that we serve, like, many hours, but I think it's mostly about the technique and some little details which can help me to have better movement and maybe better percentage on the serve.

Sometimes it's still up and down. I think it's also a lot on the energy, how much I push with the legs. We are trying to work. It's my weapon. We are always trying to adjust.

I think that no matter the conditions, either I can serve really fast, which makes it difficult for the opponent. Of course, the placement is really important. Here it's not that easy to just serve fast, so I think here I also try to focus more on the placement of the ball.



Q. You were born in Russia. Now you're representing Kazakhstan. Can you feel for Zheng? It's a huge honor to represent your country, take part in the Olympic Games or Asian Games. Can you understand how important this is for her?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Of course, I know that it's really important. Unfortunately I didn't have a chance yet to play Asian Games. I know that it's really important for the country. I think it's also not easy, a bit of pressure, of course.

Yeah, I think she did a really good job. It's not easy to come from such a tournament, such event, to play here, so...

Q. There's a trending topic right now about the performance bye. You were impacted in Tokyo. Different players have different opinions on this rule. What is your reaction to the performance bye?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Of course, in Tokyo I wasn't happy. Just with the performance bye, I wasn't informed. I really don't like the situation that everybody puts it like it was explained. My coach, of course me, I didn't have time to go to the meetings.

What was written on the fact sheet and everywhere, it was written that it's going to be in, let's say, Tokyo four to six performance byes, which didn't explain if they going to add extra two or they going to take out one bye. That's why I wasn't happy.

Even though I came to Tokyo couple of days, everybody saw me, no one told me about this, that it might happen. So this is first thing.

Here the rule is a bit different. Here it was explained a bit better.

I don't think it was good to put this rule just in end of the season because we had many events like this. I don't think that it looks nice, that world No. 1 doesn't have a bye.

But this is something to discuss with the players and see how the rule is going to be in the future because it wasn't here for four years, and that's why many players, maybe younger players like Coco, maybe she didn't know also about this. Which, as I said, it's not that difficult to explain how it's going to work. That's why many players are not happy.

Q. You talk about placement with the serve and patterns. Are you totally aware of the last break point

you served wide so now you're going to serve T? Do you just go by feel? How do you decide where to serve?

ELENA RYBAKINA: When I go by the feelings, it's not the greatest idea. This is something coach is always telling me, that I need to play a bit with the placement, to focus more where I'm staying, how I toss. There is some details which I'm trying to focus, of course, to see in which direction is more difficult for the opponent.

Yeah, this is something actually we are trying to improve, for me to be more aware on my serve.

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