

Yarra Valley Classic

Wednesday, 3 February 2021

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Sofia Kenin

Press Conference



S. KENIN/J. Pegula

5-7, 7-5, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Talk us through the tough match today.

SOFIA KENIN: Yeah, it was a tough match. Jessica is such a tough player to play. I've lost to her a few times and in practice. It was a good win for me. I'm happy with the way I competed and came back.

Q. At 0-3 and 1-4 in the second set, what are you saying to yourself?

SOFIA KENIN: I mean, I'm just like I don't want to lose because that tends to happen to me. I just kept fighting, and then I found my groove, I was happy the way I was able to change things in the second. First I did some things wrong, then I made the adjustment in the second.

It's funny, at 5-2 in the third set, I start making double-faults. That's the one thing I stopped doing in the second set, I was making more first serves. I was like, This cannot happen right now. I want to close it out, leave and be done. I'm happy I was able to close it out.

Q. Did you figure out what was going on with your serve? Seemed like you were uncharacteristically struggling with it.

SOFIA KENIN: Yeah, I mean, I was missing so many first serves. I was getting quite annoyed. Yeah, I guess, hard on myself. Then I started making them. I started going after my second serves, which was good. Then, yeah, it kind of let me down a little bit at 5-2.

A win is a win, so I'll take it.

Q. You're the defending champion at the Australian Open. You've made a couple of trips down here. Have you got into any of the Australian lingo, Australian foods?

SOFIA KENIN: No.

Q. Have you not tried things like Vegemite?

SOFIA KENIN: No, no, I haven't.

Q. Are you game to try it?

SOFIA KENIN: No (laughter).

Q. What about kangaroo? This is genuine.

SOFIA KENIN: No, that's kind of not on my mind. Yeah, I'm kind of trying to focus here and play. I'm just going to not say anything or else I'm going to lose and then get mad. So tennis (smiling).

Q. A question about the last year or so. A lot of us have had to put certain plans on hold. Is there anything you were looking forward to in the last year that you haven't gotten to do or something that when the situation gets better you're looking forward to doing?

SOFIA KENIN: Well, obviously last year after Australia, things were normally supposed to happen, like different things. Unfortunately that didn't happen, which was tough.

Yeah, I was just waiting till, like, tournaments would start happening. Before US Open Cincy was happening, then US Open. Yeah, I obviously wish there were more tournaments. Want to connect with my fans. I was super excited for the U.S. swing. Things went on hold due to COVID.

I'm happy the way I came back strong and were able to close out the year strong. I'm looking forward to no more COVID, more tournaments, more bubble life, for sure.

It's obviously nice to be back on tour competing and playing again.

Q. Anything fun off court, like seeing a movie?

SOFIA KENIN: I mean, I hope I'm not going to have time for that. Just walk around here. Here we're walking around the city and stuff. Maybe go to some stores. Depends how I do. We'll see.

Q. I wanted to ask you about what it's like out there this week. A whole bunch of tournaments going on,

men's, women's, team events. I'm wondering if you can sense that? Does it feel more crowded in the locker room or the players restaurant or lounge? A lot of people around that might not normally be?

SOFIA KENIN: I mean, players, everyone, it's the same. I see everyone. But definitely the fans. I mean, obviously it's not full capacity. But I see some fans obviously coming and supporting me in my matches. So obviously that's really nice to play in front of them. I've really missed playing in front of them.

Yeah, I can't wait for next week, to play in front after bigger crowd. Hopefully the Aussie fans will be on my side. So, yeah, let's see what happens.

Q. Your next opponent will be Pavlyuchenkova or Muguruza. Do you have any preference?

SOFIA KENIN: No. Definitely I don't have a preference. They're both really tough players. I've played obviously both of them.

Obviously if I play Garbine, it will obviously bring back last year for me. Might be some emotions. I don't know. We'll see. Anastasia, I've played her a few times. She's obviously a tough player.

Yeah, no preference. I'm just happy I'm through to the next round. I'll do everything I can to get ready for next match.

Q. You got a good number of matches in Abu Dhabi. Obviously here you're playing deep again. What exactly are you looking for in terms of what you want out of this week?

SOFIA KENIN: Well, I obviously want to continue my matches. I feel like it is a good way for me to get more confidence coming up to Australian Open. I'm happy that I feel like this tournament, I'm not putting too much pressure on myself. I'm trying to get as much matches as I possibly can, try to feel my game. Then come Australian Open, it's going to be different: more pressure on myself and everything.

I guess this week is a little bit of a relaxation week for me I guess mentally because I'm not really crazy right now. I'm kind of trying to stay as calm as possible. Coming up, it will be really, really hectic.

Q. There's so much going on around Melbourne Park right now. Attention kind of gets spread out. It's a little bit for a lot of the top players a quieter week before Melbourne than it might typically be. Do you think that helps you, the hype machine hasn't kicked into full gear before the Australian Open?

SOFIA KENIN: Yeah, I mean, I'm happy that there's

different events going on. I feel like things are coming back to somewhat normal. It's obviously nice to see a lot of matches being played. Yeah, I feel like this is a good way to start easy. There's some fans coming and supporting everyone, which is really nice to see. I'm grateful and thankful for them coming.

Yeah, definitely I think it's more exciting to come Australian Open and it's going to be a bigger crowd, obviously more noise, more hype and everything. I think everyone's using this week to somehow kind of, like, lay back, chill a little bit. Come Australian, it's going to be loud.

I'm obviously super excited and looking forward to that. I hope I'll be playing well. But we'll see.

Q. Have you had a chance to get out away from your hotel into the city? What are your impressions? While they're living semi-normally, there aren't a lot of international visitors.

SOFIA KENIN: Yeah, every day we're going out. Being in the room for two weeks, 19 hours, it's obviously tough. Obviously I, like, wanted to go out. I was looking forward for the quarantine to be done.

Literally walking around for two hours a day, literally walking around the city, getting fresh air, no masks. Obviously super nice. To see all restaurants open. One restaurant we went to last year during lunch it closed, it doesn't exist. A little devastating for me. I'm obviously superstitious. I was planning to go there for Australian Open. No, got to find another way. We'll see.

Q. Do people recognize you? What is that like for you as the defending champion?

SOFIA KENIN: Virtually no one has come up to me during this time. I guess it's good because, I mean, I'm not going to stress so much about it. I feel like if everyone was coming up to me, I'd kind of panic a little bit. Leading up, Australian Open.

I'm sure, at least I'm hoping, if I do well in the Australian Open, then people would come to me. We're staying at the Crown Towers, if anyone wants to come see me.

Q. What was the restaurant?

SOFIA KENIN: I forgot the name, shoot. It was a Vietnamese place. I recognized it. I told my dad that it's closed. He was like, This is not the restaurant. On his navigation, it was that one. He was like, How did you recognize it? Because I remember the place really well. We went there every day because I'm so superstitious.

Q. How did you feel when you won the Australian Open last year?



SOFIA KENIN: It was very special because I worked so hard to get to that position. Of course, it just meant, like, the world to me. I had a great two weeks of my life. Winning my first Grand Slam is obviously such a special feeling.

Obviously I want to inspire people like you, young generation, girls like you and boys, to follow their dreams. That's what I said in my speech: dreams happen. If you follow it and set your mind to it, you can achieve anything. Obviously it's not guaranteed. But you have to believe in yourself and you have to have people around you who really believe in you. Your parents, obviously. Family that will be there to support you.

Yeah, anything's possible.

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