

Yarra Valley Classic

Wednesday, 3 February 2021

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Serena Williams

Press Conference

S. WILLIAMS/S. Pironkova

6-1, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: She is a tough opponent, as always. Must feel good to get that under your belt.

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, it is. Last time it was an incredible three-set match. So today I was like, all right, let's really try and focus and learn to do better than last time.

Q. What is Olympia's bedtime?

SERENA WILLIAMS: It's 8:30. I know. So I'm hoping to rush home and, might make it, but then I'm a little torn. Then I'm like maybe I should just let her go to bed so she doesn't get too moody.

Q. If you come she might get a little bit hyped up.

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, she's too hyper. She needs her rest. She's a busy kid. She has a fully booked schedule.

Q. Sounds like her mom.

SERENA WILLIAMS: She's just like her mom. She really is.

Kind of funny. That kid is great. It's funny.

Q. On that score, with Olympia, how do you respond and react when a two- or a three-year-old says no?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Well, she hasn't done that to me yet (laughter). But I know there will be a day.

I tell her, you know -- we speak to her a lot. Even when she was a baby, we always have spoken like full sentences and told her explain herself.

So we haven't gotten there yet but I'm still waiting on it.

Q. I know you don't normally play lead-up tournaments in the week before a major. This is an extraordinary set of circumstances. Now we've got six lead-up tournaments. Everyone's coming out of



quarantine. How are you find the vibe? Do you actually enjoy being around so many people buzzing at this time or is it you'd prefer to be keeping it quiet and doing what you normally do?

SERENA WILLIAMS: It's different, because this time I'm usually training during the day and then having a fabulous dinner in Melbourne at night. I'm just, like, Oh, this is my week to relax. Not relax, but train and relax.

So that's been a little different, but otherwise, obviously we are all excited to play, because we need the matches. For a lot of us, it's been a long offseason. For everyone it's been a really long offseason.

Yeah, I think it's super convenient, not having to fly from a different city at least and have everything on the same site, to get used to the same conditions and everything. If there is one way to do it, I think this is definitely the way.

Q. Are you still going out for meals in restaurants?

SERENA WILLIAMS: No. But Melbourne has literally "the" best restaurants, it's one of the few places I actually go outside. I'm, like, Man, we'll figure it out. Maybe in Grand Slam week at least I'll have a day on and a day off and some time.

Q. You have been here so many times, and I have asked a few players this, and you've won so many Championships here, have you got into some of the Australian dialect and some of the Australian food in the years you have been coming here?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Well, my husband's obsessed with Vegemite. I am not. I am Team No Vegemite, sorry. What else is Aussie food?

Q. Kangaroo?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I would never. I could never. I mean, those little guys are so cute.

No. Yeah, so no. I keep it simple. Lots of other things but not that.

Q. What about words? Australian words?



SERENA WILLIAMS: Well, I feel like -- I feel like my accent could be offensive. (Laughter.) So I try not to do it.

Q. Your last round, I just happened to be sitting on the row when Alexis came down holding Olympia, and she saw you on the court and she pointed at you and said, Hey, that's my mama. Got me thinking, does she think every mom plays tennis because her aunt does, you do? Like, what is her sense of what you do?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I don't know. I know she knows I play tennis, and I know she knows my name. It's really weird. She'll be, like, Serena. How do you know my name is Serena?

Or she'll see me on TV and either say "Mama" or "Serena." I'm like, You can't say "Serena," you have to call me "Mama." It's really weird, I don't know what's going on in her little head. She knows something's up. People like ask for autographs or go, get super excited and she's like, They're here for Serena. So she knows something. I just don't know what.

Q. I'm curious if you happened to tune in at all to the PNC Championship in Orlando when Tiger played father/son with Charlie? It was such a different side of Tiger, and it was almost like he was a nervous wreck because he wanted Charlie to have fun and have a good time. I was wondering if you would see that and what that's like, knowing that could be your future?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I know. I'm excited for it. I'm hoping she doesn't do tennis, but that was really exciting to see Tiger there. And the relationship he has with his son, with both his kids really, is super, super cool.

He definitely gets incredibly nervous, it looks like, from what I could see. But I wonder, I think I would be more, like, Come on, you got this, kind of parent, where I would probably have to stay away. Or I could be the mental coach. That's definitely one of my strengths.

I don't know. I think I would be intense. I would definitely be, like, You have to do it this way. It's easy, it's simple, just do it.

Q. That video you had with Olympia when she was playing alongside you a couple of days ago, I know you were just saying you don't want her to get into tennis, but is she stronger on the backhand or the forehand side?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I think her backhand is better, because she can use both of her hands. You know, tennis is the best social distance sport in the world that we live in.

It's kind of cool. She has her coach. (Laughter.) She has lessons once a week.

It's going for her. She likes it. She gets excited. It's kind of cool.

We were joking about her coach, like, Wouldn't it be crazy if you came to Australia and had a practice court with Olympia? I wish. That would have been so funny.

Q. Is Alexis trying to push soccer?

SERENA WILLIAMS: He is. And the more he pushes soccer, the more I have to push tennis. I mean, it's just -- I mean, if we had to choose one, I would have to choose tennis. It's so fun, it's so cool.

But hopefully, you know, if it's down to the two I'm definitely going to be pushing tennis.

Q. Your form here in Melbourne has been really sharp. Has that surprised you at all after a long layoff?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I worked really hard in my little offseason that I got to work hard. I really feel like having Patrick around, like, those two weeks that we were in quarantine and all we could do is play and focus, I feel like whenever he's around full-time, we get so much accomplished and our goals are so much in line with each other and so many fabulous things happen, and I think that's what's happening.

Q. You mentioned the other day, your time with the Achilles and everything, can you play and go through tournament mode without having to be thinking about it as much, or is it still very much a thing you have to be concerned about and take care of?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Well, yeah, so far so good, and that's super exciting.

So I think what we have been doing lately with my team and my physio, we have just been -- every day they have been just killing me with different exercises to do for it.

It's finally getting better, which I'll do anything not to have that injury, because it actually affects my life. Like, I feel like knee injuries are different, but this Achilles injury is you physically can't walk.

So I feel great now, and I have to do a little more fitness on my ankles and Achilles, but that's totally fine.

Q. Were there any perks about being effectively immobilized for some time? Reading?

SERENA WILLIAMS: No, because my daughter is probably the most active kid that I know, and she wants to do everything, play, and all this other stuff. And I can't really do it when it was hurting me.

I can't think of really any positives out of that. I didn't like that one. I think the positive was pulling out of the French Open, because it could have got a lot worse. That was a tough decision, but hindsight, it was the best decision I made all year.

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