

Grampians Trophy

Tuesday, 2 February 2021

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Angelique Kerber

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What was it like celebrating your birthday in quarantine?

ANGELIQUE KERBER: It was really special (smiling).

No, it was a little bit strange, of course. But I think I will never forget this birthday. I mean, I got a cake, and I was trying to dressing up a little bit and celebrate, yeah, in my hotel room my birthday.

Q. Would it be fair to say that this has been the most psychologically difficult major that you've ever had to prepare for?

ANGELIQUE KERBER: You know, I mean, of course it was not the plan, to stay in the hard lockdown. I know that I had a great preparation. I worked a lot at home with my team the last few weeks, actually two months.

I understand, of course, that's actually, yeah, the progress, like to stay in the hard lockdown because of all the things what happened.

I was trying more to being calm, trying to take the best out of the situation. I mean, I think Australia is doing such a great job right now. When you go outside, they have no cases. They suffer for so many months here. I think on one side it was the best thing to do.

Now I'm just try, you know, to get used to the courts as soon as possible, playing a lot of points. Starting also a little bit slow, not to think to try that I can now, yeah, get the two weeks back in few days.

On the other side, I try to do the best from the situation.

Q. You were injured last year, had a long layoff. What is the hardest thing about coming back?

ANGELIQUE KERBER: I think for me the hardest thing was, like, when you are not playing and competing for such a long time, to get back physically, to really feel your body again being in a good shape. This takes a lot of time when you're out, I don't know, a few months.

Yeah, mentally, of course, to find and have still the

motivation to get on court, practicing, going until your limits. I think that's the hardest challenge.

But, you know, I'm happy that I have a good team around me, that we have a lot of fun on court and try to also enjoy every single day because right now you cannot really plan too much ahead.

Yeah, let's just try to do the best out of every single day we can get out on court.

Q. Coming back here after the two weeks, the first day back, when you woke up the next day, did you feel particularly sore?

ANGELIQUE KERBER: Yeah, I feel a little bit, to be honest. When I wake up, I was like, Okay, tennis is really a hard sport because you feel the whole body when you are, like, two weeks only in your hotel room (laughter).

But like now, two, three days later, it's feels okay again. But, yeah, after the first day it was a little bit hard to get back on court.

Q. Given your quarantine situation, does that ease some of the pressure or add pressure now coming into the Open?

ANGELIQUE KERBER: I mean, that's an easy question and easy answer. I mean, for sure I don't have any pressure right now. Like I said, I was prepared really good. I practiced a lot. But now, I mean, I took my pressure out, my expectation, everything. I mean, of course it was not the plan, how I planned the trip to Australia. On the other side, I can just try to do the best now. I can enjoy the sport even more than before, I think. I will really put my pressure out and just try to play as good as I can in this tournament.

Q. Is there kind of a surreal feeling from the fact that you were in your room for 24/7, not allowed out, then not a long period of time later you're going to be in a stadium with fans, you can walk on the street, people aren't wearing masks. Is it difficult for your mind to adjust to things like that?

ANGELIQUE KERBER: I mean, the first few hours and the first day was really, really strange because, of

course, you are sitting in the room and you know the situation, how it is in Europe, where you came from. Now you are out, you can go to restaurants, bars, coffee shops. Everything is open. It feels really like one year ago. It's such a great feeling again.

Of course, I'm so looking forward to play again in front of the crowds, in front of the fans. This is also the motivation I have. That's why I'm here to playing again in front of the fans. That's why, yeah, I was practicing a lot the last few weeks.

Q. Can you explain a little bit more what was going on in your mind when you land in Melbourne, you've had this great preparation, you have great expectations for what could happen, then you have to make that mental adjustment after being in hard lockdown. How did you get to the point where you seem you're in peace for what the situation is right now?

ANGELIQUE KERBER: I think when I get, yeah, when they told me you have to stay in the hard lockdown. At first I was a little bit shocked, like, Okay, is that really real? I was not expecting this, for sure.

But then, really like few minutes after that, I was like, Okay, this is now the situation. I can also understand the other side. Let's just do the best I can do because now I'm here, I cannot move out again.

You know, I was trying to stay calm and find the peace out of the situation. I think also all the experience and also how, yeah, I am right now gives me actually the calm to really stay the 14 days in the room and did my exercises, doing few stuff, things that I never do.

I don't know, every day I was FaceTime with all my friends. I was still trying to adjust to the time to Australia because I was living I think the first eight days like in German time still.

But I was trying really to stay calm. I think when you get older, you are really, like, having the peace inside of you.

Q. You mentioned the first couple of days that you've had outside practicing, you're feeling it in your body. After two weeks of not being able to be active, what are you feeling the most in terms of what's missing? Is it the rhythm? The physical side? What is it that you feel like you have to kind of now catch up on ahead of Melbourne?

ANGELIQUE KERBER: I think it's a little bit the movement, of course, especially like the shot and the sprints, like the movement. On the other side, of course, playing points, finding the rhythm to playing points again. I think these two are really challenging me.

But, I mean, finding the rhythm I think when I play a few matches, it will come. I have so many experience already to know how it is. I think also what's really important is the mental thing right now, especially for me that I'm not like, Okay, I went through the two weeks of hard lockdown, but it's okay I'm fine with that, and now I'm looking ahead. I'm not looking back. I'm just trying to, okay, I'm okay, I practice good before, and try to take, yeah, the best out of that.

Q. As you look ahead to the Australian Open, obviously you'll have days off between matches. Does that give you maybe a sense of calm? There's time essentially for you to kind of catch up to where you need to be.

ANGELIQUE KERBER: Yeah, I think it's always good if you have a day off. I mean, especially when you came out of the two weeks. Now I think the most important thing is really to have matches, to find the rhythm on court, and to not try to do too much.

I think it's really important to not get injured, to still plan your day schedule like really with a sense. This is a really big challenge also for me because, of course, I'm going out. I want to play, I don't know, three times a day, just hitting balls.

I'm trying to just hit once, do my fitness stuff, just coming slowly back because I think this is really important to really stay healthy.

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