

United Cup

Tuesday, 2 January 2024

Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Team Australia

Ajla Tomljanovic

Press Conference

J. PEGULA/A. Tomljanovic

7-6, 6-3

Team USA - 1

Team Australia - 1

THE MODERATOR: Ajla, a tough battle out there today. Can you just give us your thoughts on your performance and the match.

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, definitely happy with my level after Friday. Not going to lie. Friday really kind of put me down, just thought, I really thought my level wasn't there. But coming out today and putting up a good fight, and even though I didn't win, I felt like I had so many chances.

Just the fact that -- the biggest difference I feel today was that whenever I was up, I would, you know, blink and two points would go away in a cheap way and she wouldn't do that. So it costs you against, what is she, 4 in the world?

THE MODERATOR: 5.

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah. That's just going to take a little bit of time, unfortunately. But yeah, didn't feel that far off today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. As you say, it was so close. I mean, you had the set points in the first set. There were the break opportunities in the second. What do you think made the difference? There's a point here or there, really, that could have turned that whole thing around.

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: It's just that little bit of confidence in yourself when it's crunch time. I'm not saying I can't do it now. I just think that it's lacking a little bit. You know, if I had maybe won a few tight -- like, if I had won that set, I think that would have been a big, like, thing, like, I would have felt in the second set that if it came down to it, well,



I did it in the first, I can do it again. I'm not saying I'm going to need 10 matches to get there. It was really valuable to do that in the first set, to feel like, yeah, I'm toe to toe, and I can finish it off.

But when it kind of goes away from you, it did stay in my mind a little bit. Even though I broke in the second and, yeah, like, I was up, I feel like on my serve, 40-15 and then back to deuce and then it's pressure again. Where she stayed a bit more solid in those moments.

Yeah, it goes away quick when you're not on it.

Q. Comparing the match the other night, how were the nerves? Were they comparable? Was the first match more daunting?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: I mean, the nerves were still there, but I think that, you know, I had to really think about what went wrong on Friday and make sure that I don't get in a similar situation where it takes me a set and a half to find my game.

But I do think that Katie made me a lot more uncomfortable on Friday than today, what Jess did. I just think the way Katie played really, like, just attacking me off of every shot put me on the defense all the time. I did feel the match was a bit different.

But I am happy that I just put up a better quality match today, because I was a little bit down last two days.

Q. Is that the kind of match you have missed, that sort of atmosphere where you feel like you're really in it and the crowd is lifting you, getting behind you?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, especially against someone like Jess. You can feel when it's good quality against someone, you know, that highly ranked. And the thing is, she always puts up a quality, it never dips lower than her standard, which is a good indication for me that, you know, I can still play a good level. Just need to kind of clean it up a little bit more.

Q. How do you go from what was tonight a really good performance to now preparing for the Oz Open?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Just, you know, there's Adelaide for me next week or whenever, and just more practice and get more matches in. You know, just the usual.

I wish I could have gotten a win in these two matches I played here. Would have been nice. But I can still take a lot of positives and feel like I've done well, in a way, but still feel that hunger that I'm eager for that first win of the season.

Q. What's it like playing in front of those fans? Does that give you another edge heading into the Australian Open? Are you prepared for that again?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, you're kind of always expecting that because the fans in Australia are unmatched, in a way. But I feel like experiencing United Cup with the team and having Lleyton on the bench was something that was really cool for me, and the guys behind, and Ellen and Stormy and Patty.

Yeah, it was just a different vibe than whatever I have experienced in the past. That's something I'll kind of cherish. Yeah, it was definitely, there were definitely some good moments out there. I'm not going to try to erase them just because there wasn't a win.

Q. You spoke the other night just about your different perspective after that injury layoff. Curious to know what sort of weapons that would be going into the Australian Open just knowing in those key moments maybe you can calm yourself a bit better or handle harder moments better?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Well, I think people might also underestimate me, because they know I haven't played in a while. I feel like I can still play a pretty good level.

The fact that I, in a way, I believe in myself but I'm not expecting huge things because I always try to bring myself to the reality of the situation that I haven't played much. It's still such a process of relearning my body and how I move and my game in a way, like. It's almost like a new -- not new career, but new chapter, because things are different. They feel different. I feel like every day, with every match, I'm learning a lot of what works, what doesn't.

That's kind of cool, but also, it's annoying sometimes (smiling) because I want it to be a little more automatic and I still feel like I'm, I don't know, like, things sometimes go differently than I expect. Like, some shots, I'm like, What is that? (Smiling.)

Q. You mentioned some people might underestimate you. Does it make you feel a bit freer going into this summer?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, I think so. I think they just might because I haven't played in a while, and my ranking shows that. That might be, like, a little edge I have on people, that they're, like, Oh, she hasn't played so maybe she's not going to be as sharp (smiling).

But I feel like maybe by the time AO comes around I could clean up some of these things that are happening right now. But at the same time, I feel like in a way everyone takes everyone seriously, too, so we'll see.

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