

Australian Open

Friday, 12 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Ajla Tomljanovic

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Ajla, welcome back to the Australian Open. How does it feel to be here after what's already been a busy start to the season?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Feels great. Walking to this press room, I've had flashbacks from last year. That was not fun. Max was crying in the hallway.

It's a much nicer walk than this year. I'm really excited, I feel good, and yeah, ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Was withdrawing from Adelaide just a precaution? Do you feel as prepared as you can be for the Australian Open?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: It just felt like the most sensible decision. Every other year I probably would have gone, but I felt like with my knee, I had some really good matches. It's not even my knee, it's just getting back into the swing of things, playing at a high level. Four matches was plenty. If that was a regular tournament, you lose in a semi, I probably would have made the same decision.

Nothing bad. Just was smarter to have a week to really prepare.

Q. How well-prepared do you feel? A year ago when you withdrew you were devastated. How do you feel a year on?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: I think as well as I could have prepared, considering everything. I'd be lying if I'm sitting here and being like, This is the best I've ever felt, because that's not also realistic.

I feel happy with where I'm at. I think I'm always dangerous in these stages of the tournament. I still feel like people don't want to play me, especially in the early rounds.

In a way, it will be interesting to see how I play. Kind of I'm treating it as my first slam back, even though I played US Open. That was way too early.

Yeah, it's kind of like in a way a new chapter, so we'll see.

Q. A lot of players are coming back from injuries, even maternity leave. Players are talking about feeling more relaxed, having more perspective after a long layoff. Did you feel that at all, getting away from the grind of the tour, living a more normal life?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Well, rehabbing I always have that thought. As soon as I'm back into the swing of things, it evaporates and I have to remind myself the perspective, that it's amazing that I've gotten this far and rehabbed my knee back to health.

I'm too competitive to keep that mindset throughout. I probably should. I am grateful. When we talk like this, with my team, yeah, I'm happy it's going the right direction. The match against Kerber, none of that matters because I think it doesn't matter where you're at, you can still expect yourself to win.

Q. Taking on Petra in round one. What are your thoughts on that one?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: I haven't played her in a while. I feel like I know her game quite well, and she knows mine. We kind of grew up together actually. She used to play with my sister. So we go way back.

Yeah, it's really I'm not thinking much about anything other than myself. I have things I want to execute going into the first round. Didn't really matter who's on the other side.

Q. You said after your US Open withdrawal that you wanted to go back to the drawing board and get fitter and stronger. Do you feel you were able to achieve that?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, 100%. I took about two months of training and slowly increasing my load, adding track workouts to my schedule, and really not having a pressure date where I have to be back. It was more like, Okay, if I manage to play a few more matches before the end of the year, it's a bonus. After the US Open, AO became the priority. That felt like so doable 'cause there was plenty of time.

I was pretty fortunate to play some quality matches before the year ended, which made me really excited for



the start of January.

Q. Just in terms of the injuries and setbacks you suffered, how strong has that made you mentally?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Hmm. I don't know. We'll see if it made me mentally tougher. I think it made me want it even more.

I think without realizing, it probably did make me stronger just emotionally because you don't rehab yourself back if you're not stubborn about getting back. I mean, there's plenty of examples when athletes don't get back where they believe they can get to, or they have less luck than me. That's why I do feel lucky that my knee responded to everything we've done for it.

Yeah, there's a lot of resilience that took place in 2023. It for sure will pay off. It's always kind of you don't think about that. It's probably somewhere in there, but it's not taking center stage.

Q. A lot of players say they don't look too far ahead in the draw. Have you taken a look at how it potentially opens up? Possibly Kim Birrell or Elena.

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: No, this isn't anything new. I never look ahead. Now I know.

It's not a big deal if I find out. It's just that's my mindset. I don't care. I take care of the first step, and the next one I'll worry about when I have it.

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