

# Australian Open

Sunday, 14 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Leylah Fernandez

Press Conference



L. FERNANDEZ/S. Bejlek

7-6, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started. Leylah, congratulations on your win today. Can you just give us an overview on your performance and the conditions out there today?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah. Well, it was a good match. It wasn't a perfect match, but I'm just glad that I was able to fight through some of the tough moments that I encountered in the first set and just kept fighting. When I had my chance to close it out in the breaker, I was just happy that I was able to execute it.

But I think it was a good first round, get a feel of the court, get a feel of the tournament, and I can just improve from there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English, please.

**Q. Just what your thoughts were on her game just as she's a young up-and-comer. Wanted to see what you thought.**

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: She's a very good player. She's very offensive. She does hit a lot of down-the-lines. To be honest, I wasn't expecting it, but I think it was a good thing that she did it so then it got me thinking of what I needed to do. I was able to think a little bit more what I could counter that.

Then she does play defense really well. She's able to slice it, keep the ball low so I don't attack it more or needing to neutralize. So she has a good game, and I'm sure it's just going to improve from there.

**Q. Eleven teenagers started in the women's draw. When you are playing against someone that young, does it take you back to the time when you were starting out at the elite level?**

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: It honestly makes me feel old (laughing). But, yeah, when I play against someone younger, it does make me think a little bit more of when I first started. I think that also helps because I remember when I started, I was hungry. I wanted to kind of prove

myself that I could be here.

I just knew that today she's going to have that same feeling, she's going to do that. She was playing really well. So I think I was just happy that, like I said, on key moments I was able to stay calm and just execute my game.

**Q. Do you remember that many teenagers being in a main draw at a major when you were doing it?**

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: No, because I don't have a great memory, so I don't really remember what happened yesterday, let alone two, three years ago. So I think I'll just have to look back then, but yeah, I just don't remember.

**Q. What's your favorite thing about Melbourne, and where do you like to go to unwind?**

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Well, my favorite thing about Melbourne is the weather. I love how it's unpredictable. Sometimes it's not always the best, but I love that it's unpredictable because then it just keeps me on my toes.

The second thing that I do love about Melbourne is the fans, how they just get into their sport and just keep cheering us on. Even if we're not Australian, they just love to be out there, and that brings a smile to my face. That gives me motivation to keep playing and keep fighting.

I think for me I just like to go out of the hotel and just walk a little bit, walk along the water. Sometimes I just go out with my coach and just kind of talk nonsense and just spend time outside of the tennis court and hotel.

**Q. You've never had fantastic results in Australia over your career so far. So just wondering if you addressed that in the preseason, or did you try anything different leading into the Australian summer.**

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Well, thank you for pointing that out. That is very, very true. I've never had excellent results in Australia, but I think every year I'm just learning little by little about my mistakes, what I've done right, what I've done wrong.

This year I think we just wanted to come out here and just have fun. It is the Aussie summer and just use that to my advantage. I love playing in the summer, so kind of think of it that way that I'm in summer, and I'm just going to play and have fun out there, and hopefully the results are coming my way.

**Q. Obviously a fantastic finish to your season last fall. What do you do to help bridge that, continue that momentum, if you even can, given an offseason and continue that into the new season? Is there anything you can do to continue it?**

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think I'll have to ask the top players about that. I don't know. I'm trying to figure that out myself, see what works for me.

But right now, like I said, I'm just trying to enjoy the moment and not think about what I've done in the past or what I should be doing in the future.

I'm just going to try to enjoy the moment here with my team. I'm going to talk with my family, FaceTime my sister, just kind of see how everything is going. I'm just happy that I got another opportunity to play the Australian Open.

**Q. Just in terms of the fall and the last two tournaments, when you have distance looking at it, what unlocked for you? What do you think was a significant factor in propelling you to those?**

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: It feels like a lifetime ago. I think it was just months and months of hard work that it was finally clicking and that I was just, again, enjoying myself on the court once more. I think in those tournaments after a couple of points, I was able to play some good ones, and I was just happy to be on court. That helped me to play my best game.

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