

Australian Open

Thursday, 18 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Anna Blinkova

Press Conference



A. BLINKOVA/E. Rybakina

6-4, 4-6, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Anna, congratulations.

ANNA BLINKOVA: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Your match had everyone at Melbourne Park watching a TV screen. How fun was that to play, or how relieved are you right now?

ANNA BLINKOVA: Before the match, I was telling myself that I'm going there to enjoy. It was my dream to play on the Rod Laver Arena. I was preparing myself to only have positive emotions on the court no matter how the match goes. I was telling myself that I only had to give my best until the very last moment and enjoy every single moment of it.

Of course, on the match it was difficult to always stay positive. I had a lot of great moments, but I also had many frustrating moments, for example, all the match points that I couldn't convert.

I was doing a lot of mental work, a lot of self-talk to just stay positive and telling myself that I still can win the match until the very end.

I was trying to have a plan for every point until the very, very end. This is what helps me to win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. How much did the experience of playing Caroline Garcia last spring at Roland Garros help today in terms of big court, big opponent, big occasion, and a loud crowd?

ANNA BLINKOVA: Yeah, it definitely helped a lot. I feel like every time when I play on a huge arena like this, every time I get more and more experience, and I'm getting more and more used to it.

When I played at the French Open against Caroline, the crowd was mostly against me, obviously. Today they were cheering me up so much. They were incredible. I loved it. I loved it. My dream came true to play on Rod

Laver, full of spectators. The energy was crazy.

I enjoyed it a lot.

Q. You were playing a person who's won a Grand Slam title, who's been in the final here. You had match points in the third set which you weren't able to convert. When it went into the tiebreaker, at any time was there a stage where you thought you had lost it, or did you always maintain the confidence you could win?

ANNA BLINKOVA: Yeah, good question.

I had negative thoughts coming to my head, especially when I could not convert my match points and I was match point down on the return. I had a lot of thoughts what if she serves well, what if she hits big first serve, it's going to be over.

I tried to push these thoughts away. I was telling myself to cut the trajectory, accelerate the hand on the return. I was telling myself to stay solid all the time, just to keep running everywhere and putting all the balls in the court.

When I had opportunities, when I had match points, I was rushing. My hand was shaking. I tried to be aggressive, but I was making a lot of mistakes.

Finally I was able to stay solid. In the last match point, I remember the last match point that I converted, I was in defense. I think I hit two backhands very short but very tough backhands. I'm super happy that I put them in the court.

Q. Can you remember ever yourself watching a tiebreaker that went for that kind of length?

ANNA BLINKOVA: Yeah, a couple. Yeah, sometimes. Not this long probably. I heard that this is the longest tiebreak ever. It's crazy (smiling).

Q. The crowd, everyone watching on TV, was just in awe asking, When it will end?

ANNA BLINKOVA: Endless tiebreaker (smiling).

Q. In terms of what it took for you, we focus on the tiebreak, but what was the key for you to even get



yourself to the point where you had match points on her before the tiebreak? What tactically and execution-wise did you do well tonight to put yourself in a winning position?

ANNA BLINKOVA: If I have to say one word, I would say 'courage'. It took me a lot of courage. I was going for it. I was trying to find the balance between being aggressive and being solid, not rushing, but trying to make her play one more shot, one more shot.

I think in the second set I became a little bit more defensive so she could step forward, and she could make me run, and she was in aggressive.

In the third set, I was telling myself to be more aggressive, to go more for it, to hit harder, to make her move more. It took me courage. It took me some certain calmness to stay in the present moment and to play point by point no matter what happens in the point, the point that I lost.

Q. You were talking about how your hands and legs were shaking. Very high-stress moment. Tennis players are also incredible perfectionists who expect a lot from themselves. What kind of mental work or work that you've done in the last year or so - you talked about this in China - about trying to be kinder to yourself and allow yourself to not be as hard on yourself all the time? Did that help at all tonight?

ANNA BLINKOVA: Yeah, I used to be a perfectionist. I used to never be happy with how I play. For example, if I win the point not in the way that I want, not with a beautiful shot, I was not happy with that.

Any point that I win is a good point. Any shot that I put in the court is a good shot. That's what I tell myself. I've been doing a lot of mental work to not panic, to stay calm, to breathe, to not be frustrated after mistakes.

I always tell myself that everybody does mistakes, it's normal. As soon as the intention is good, as soon as my intention is to put the ball in the court, that's a good shot. I just have to keep doing it.

Q. The general one, which is what does this win mean to you?

ANNA BLINKOVA: A lot. To be honest, I had a lot of motivation obviously to win this match. One of my motivations was to stay here. Before going the court, I was telling myself that I will fight to stay here longer at the Australian Open in the best atmosphere in the world.

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