

Australian Open

Friday, 19 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Ajla Tomljanovic

Press Conference



J. OSTAPENKO/A. Tomljanovic

6-0, 3-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Ajla, a very hard-fought battle out there today against Ostapenko. Can you just give us your thoughts and your performance and the keys to the match today.

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, look, I feel like I blinked and it was over. It felt like a really quick match. She came out swinging, and I knew I should expect that, but I wasn't ready.

She really put me in uncomfortable positions. I never felt like I could play my game. There was a lot of defending. Then at one point I was just swinging so hard because there was no way to defend those balls that she hits.

Credit to her, she never slowed down. In the end it was just a few points here or there. I felt like I got a bit, actually I wouldn't say unlucky, but she just played great on those breakpoints I had.

Then the game I got broken at 2-all, didn't feel like I did much wrong. But that's kind of the whole match, it was either an amazing winner where she almost takes the tennis out of your hand, or she misses by a little bit, and I turn around, and I feel like I haven't hit any balls. So it was very hard to play.

But I am proud of the fact that after a tough, I don't know, it was like 20 minutes first set, and I still fought back. That could have been an 0-1 or 0-2 just because it felt so quick.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Can you talk about how you did get yourself composed or stay composed and turn that around in the second set, because it was really impressive the first game you were straight on her?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: I mean, my team gave me a few tips just to try to be the one that dictates. That's really hard to do when she's having the first punch. So whenever I felt I had an inch, I tried to just take a swing. It paid off. But even when I won that set, I was, like, it

didn't feel like I won it. I don't know.

It was just fast. I know it was an hour and 40 or something, but it felt crazy. I don't even feel almost like I'm that tired. It was just really, really quick tennis.

Yeah, so it is kind of on her terms. But yeah, she's a great player. She's playing confident tennis, I must say.

Q. Ajla, after what was I'm sure some difficult memories of being here 12 months ago, how do you feel in the immediate aftermath of this match knowing all that you've been through and all that you've had to endure in that 12-month period sitting here having played pretty good tennis for a couple of rounds? You obviously have come a long way.

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah. Right now I'm it's not coming to mind. It's really fresh, the match I just played. But as far as emotions go, I don't even feel that I wouldn't say angry or that sad because it really felt like she played great. I don't really know what happened. I don't know.

So it's a bit mixed. I feel like I should be angry, but I'm really chilled because it didn't feel like I did something crazy wrong. I actually feel like I can learn a lot from this match.

But I think when I do think back to 12 months ago, I just feel lucky that I'm here because nothing is granted once you go through something like that.

I already kind of in my mind am excited about the next events and next tournaments. It's always hard to go away from here because it's so full-on, and the crowds are amazing, but I'm really hungry just to keep playing because my body is holding up well, and I'm super happy about that.

I'm still in doubles, so the dream is not over yet.

Q. Jelena was quite generous in her words about your recovery after the game. It seemed like at the net there was quite a warm embrace between you both. Can you take us through that exchange and the relationship you've had in the last day or so with her?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, look, when I step on the

court, there's nothing -- I never think about anything other than competing. I really credit to her how she played. I really respected her game.

What happened happened in the past. It's water under the bridge now. I think there is mutual respect between her and I. She was really kind with her words when we shook hands and she said she was happy to see me back. As a competitor, I really appreciate. I just said good luck to her.

Yeah, it's all good.

Q. Just touching on the excitement you are feeling about your game and looking ahead, how close do you feel you are to getting back to your best tennis? I know you've only had one win, but you must feel like you're getting close and moving in the right direction.

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: That's a good question. I don't know.

It felt like the first set, in my mind, I feel like I'm a little far from this level. But then it's never that far, as far as you think it is. I do know in practice I'm playing good tennis, but it's never the same.

If I can kind of summarize this Aussie summer, I'm pretty happy with where I'm at and how I've responded under pressure really because as much as I'm kind of coming back, I did expect myself to play well.

So I definitely think I just need more court time and it will come at some point. Yeah, without the constant work, it's not going to come. I feel like I'm on the right track, but I have to keep working.

Q. You talked before the tournament that you are learning to almost move differently with the knee. The knee is not the same as it was, and that's not necessarily a negative, but how did you find that playing at Grand Slam level?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Yeah, like today I felt a bit slow out of the corners, but then she's playing really quick. It was really good feedback for me to be, like, well, probably is not going to get faster than this.

I like that there's a lot of room to improve. But I do also think that if this is what it is, I can work with that, and I can maybe...

Today was a good example that maybe I should be more aggressive because it did pay off for me at certain moments. That's why I think I could learn a lot from what happened tonight.

Look, the best thing, the knee is pain-free. I can be

quicker out of the corners and a little bit more determined with my movement because I always start a bit tentative. I'm doing a long warmups. It's still in my head a little bit, but that's okay. I have to go through that.

Q. Just quickly on Storm Hunter, what would you say about her run in this tournament and her chances against Barbora?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Look, I have been telling Storm for a while now she needs to start playing singles only. She already proved she's the best in doubles. So she hasn't listened to me yet. I think she can do amazing things in singles.

She's been amazing in Billie Jean King Cup over the last couple of years, and she's clutch. Seeing her have success here at home is really awesome because she can play at that level. But I do think it's hard to do that when you are playing such a high level of doubles and your ranking is not quite there with your singles.

In my opinion, she's going to have to make a decision at some point. I feel like she proved here that she really does belong at the higher level in the singles game.

One thing with Storm, you never count her out. She loves playing at home, big court. Yeah, I like her chances. I think regardless of the result, I know it's going to be a battle for sure.

Q. Beyond doubles, where will we see you next? After you leave Australia, where are you playing?

AJLA TOMLJANOVIC: Hopefully I'll play in Hua Hin, the 250. Then TBD. My schedule depends sometimes on wild cards because I'm really selective with my special ranking tournaments that I'm using.

For now the next special ranking one I'll use probably Indian Wells. Yeah, everything else I'm kind of just looking what's the best schedule-wise, quallies or main draw. I don't know. Thailand for sure.

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