

Australian Open

Tuesday, 23 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Marta Kostyuk

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/M. Kostyuk

7-6, 6-7, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Marta, a very tough match today. Just talk us through your thoughts, especially coming back in that second set. Just your reflections on the match.

MARTA KOSTYUK: I think it's just a tennis match, you know. I'm here to grow, to learn, to be better. Yeah, very proud of myself. I won for myself today, and I think it's the most important thing. It's just the beginning of the season. Looking forward for what's ahead.

Yeah, great match with Coco today. Another fight (smiling). Unfortunately couldn't get a win today, but played a very, very good tournament. Yeah, moving on. It's tennis (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Following up on that, what makes you feel like you won?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I lost first set, which was a bit painful, you know. Was 5-1 up. Set point on 5-2. Then very, very good idea on 6-5, but just didn't execute it well enough, you know.

So was not mentally, you know, it was like -- you know, your first time in the quarters, you lose the first set, and you're like, Oh, it's okay, it was a good fight. Let's go home now. It was really like this.

Yeah, it was painful, and I was just thinking how I'm not going to be able to fall asleep thinking about this inside-out forehand for a couple of days, probably.

Yeah, I came back, and being 5-2 down she served for the match. Yeah, I think it was just, you know, now I will not remember this inside-out tonight, because at the end of the day, it's not what decides the match. Everyone misses easy balls. Everyone wins very tough points, as well.

Yeah, for me, it's a win because I managed to, you know, I was playing one of the best girls in the world. Managed

to be still very close. You know, it feels far but also very close. This whole tournament I think is a big win for me. Just looking forward (smiling).

Q. You said it's about learning, start of the season, going to take everything you learned here going forward. What are the lessons, biggest takeaways?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I think the first one is dream big. It really is.

I remember there was this one song that we were -- it's a good story. We were driving back very late from site in Brisbane. Holger [ph.], it was like a shadow, and Holger had his phone connected to the car and he put this song, it's called "Younger," by Kygo, Kygo Remix. There was this phrase that says: You can get to your dreams without falling asleep. It was something like this.

I remembered this very well. I was listening to this song later on for quite sometime, and always this phrase was really catching me a lot, you know. Because, you know, I started the season, I knew I'm doing the right things and I knew I'm working well. Everything is kind of aligning. You're like, well, yeah, it's supposed to happen but I don't know when, I don't know how, and where.

Yeah, it was kind of everything that happened here was kind of expected but also unexpected, because I had very difficult matches. There were a lot of things I just went through in this last ten days, and it was from not being able to fall asleep, you know, then to really barely lifting my leg in fourth round. It was a good match but at times I really felt like it's easier to cut my leg off because it was really, really painful.

The team here was amazing. You know, physios and massage therapists. They just brought me back to life somehow. I was still in a lot of pain most of the tournament, and I still managed to compete and, you know, show great level of tennis.

So, you know, there is really no limit in human possibilities I think. I mean, of course you can look at Novak and say the same thing. But I have my perspective of my possibilities (smiling).

Yeah, and biggest, also one of big lessons I had was, like, just in my head, overcoming certain things that I

couldn't overcome for some time. Yeah, and this clarity of, like, you know, if I see -- how do I say it? Wait. My brain. I have to think.

Yeah, if there is something that I notice, it means it's there and it's valid, and I will overcome it sooner or later. Because I think the most important thing is when you recognize something. Because a lot of people, they live and they don't recognize anything that's going on around them, what they're doing, what they're saying, how they're saying things, what they're thinking even, and how it -- how do you say? Influences their life.

Yeah, it takes a lot of work, takes a lot of, you know, conscious living. But I'm very happy to be on this journey and, you know, just looking forward to what else I can learn. I mean, there is obviously millions and billions of things that I don't know, but I'm just excited for what they are.

Q. Marta, do you think your campaign in this tournament has been successful in terms of attracting media attention to Ukraine again?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I think so. I think girls did really well. I hope, you know, we will be able to succeed on most of the tournaments, especially the big ones where there is a lot of media.

Yeah, I think people should be reminded. I walk off the court -- before the match I was looking at the news and I kind of guess that most likely there would be a big missile shelling again. When I walked off the court, I look at this news again, and again, I don't know how many missiles yet. It's still too fresh. But yeah, I was texting with some people from Kyiv. I said, How is it? How are you guys? They said, Well, we were looking between your score and where the missiles are flying.

So it's still there. It's still there. My parents are still there. My daughter -- "my daughter," wow, wow, wow, "my daughter." Wow. No. My sister is still there (smiling).

Yeah, it's still there, you know. Still not gone.

Q. Following up on the Ukraine question, it's been two years since the war began. Did you ever expect it to last this long? How is that affecting you? Do you feel like it's your role to lift the spirits of your people?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I think if someone would have told us, like, one month after the war began that this would last for two years, I think everyone would just die, like, literally just say, No, never, we will never withstand it, we will never survive this for two years.

So yeah, time goes by, and things happen. Yeah, it's very exhausting to live in this state, you know.

I mean, sport has always brought a lot of joy and happiness for people regardless of times. I don't think it changed. I think it's the same.

I got a lot of messages, a lot of support from people who have been telling me, Wow, what a great tournament, such emotions, what a fight, what fighting spirit, you know, was so good to watch, like, we enjoy it so much.

Obviously it's good, you know, for people not to just change perspective but, you know, to look at something different rather than other than missile shellings. So hopefully, I really hope that Ukrainian sport will grow even in these circumstances. It's incredibly difficult, but everyone is hanging very tight. And in support of other countries, I think it's still possible for it to grow.

Obviously we are behind everyone. We are behind, and I think it's not even that visible yet. I think it will be visible in 10, 15 years how behind we are, unfortunately, because the generation that is growing now is the one that suffers the most. I mean, my sister, for example, she does high jump, the one that you go like this, so she does this, and she's actually very good. No one would have ever thought about this, because she's very tall and not light, you know. (Laughter.)

She's not -- sorry. I'm not saying she's, like, overweight or whatever. She's not very skinny. You know, like all these high jumpers, you know, they are very skinny, and she's not. My mom is like, Wow, if someone would have told me she would do high jump, I would never believe it in my life, you know. Yeah, she's pretty good at it, but, you know, there are a lot of difficulties of performing, being in these conditions.

So, yeah, I mean, I think, you know, I hope I will have enough time and influence in the future to help as many kids in sports as I can, but it's not easy, you know, and sport is not an easy thing to do anyways, regardless if there is a war or not.

So yeah, I don't know, I really hope for the best, and I really just hope that this whole thing will make people just stronger and more endure. So then we can, you know, build on this in the future.

Q. What are your goals for the rest of the season? It's already started off with a bang.

MARTA KOSTYUK: I think they haven't changed. It's just I have more clarity. Obviously, I think one of the goals -- I never put ranking goals. I don't think it, like, makes sense really. I mean, it's just a number, at the end of the day.

I still want to win a Grand Slam. It's still my biggest goal. I will be going for that.

Yeah, we will see for the other tournaments. I don't know. That's my biggest and only goal so far is Grand Slam.

Q. What did it take for you to embrace the mentality of growing and learning? How difficult is that to do maybe in the past, in a sport where obviously you win and lose and it can be easy to just judge yourself based on results?

MARTA KOSTYUK: Can you repeat the beginning of the question. I didn't understand.

Q. What did it take for you to embrace the mentality of growing and learning, which you talked about before?

MARTA KOSTYUK: What did it take?

Q. Was it a difficult thing to do?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I think it's one of the most difficult things to do. I don't know if for everyone. Of course there are people who are more talented in certain way, you know, that certain things come easier to them.

For example, I'm very athletic. Being fit and athletic was never a problem, really, for me, to keep up with it was my natural advantage. But I had other disadvantages, you know, how everyone has. It's normal.

Yeah, it took me many, many years. I think I'm doing therapy for two years already. And before that, yeah, I was also, like, try to figure out, I wasn't really in therapy, but I was like, okay, something's wrong, I have to do something about it, but I don't know how.

But yeah, it takes a lot of self-awareness and a lot of, like, you really need to take your ego and you need to put it very far in the ground so you don't see it for some time even (smiling).

Yeah, this is one of the toughest. I think even just general for people it's tough, and it was my problem before.

Yeah, I think, you know, at first I was looking at everything, Oh, how can I achieve a slam as soon as possible? Everything was revolving around this. Then I came to the point where I was like, Yeah, but you don't know. You really don't know what it takes to win a Grand Slam, you know. It can be really way less than you think or way more than you think. You know, you really don't know.

Yeah, and I think I shifted the perspective a little bit, you know. It's just about in general, it's just about learning and growing.

I don't think it makes sense to connect it to tennis and results, because at the end of the day you go home and you're not a tennis player. You have to live with yourself, you know. And if you have a Grand Slam but you're the most miserable person on the planet, you don't even care about this Grand Slam. You just want to die or you want to, like, I don't know what you want, but definitely not to enjoy this life.

Yeah, it was always, you know, even when I was doing therapy, I was never focusing on, like, Okay, what do I need to do to be successful in tennis? It's because there are a lot of other things in life that should be in balance so that you feel as good as possible on tennis court.

So, yeah, I think career is just one quarter of, not even one-quarter. Quarter is eighth?

THE MODERATOR: Quarter is 25.

MARTA KOSTYUK: I need --

THE MODERATOR: An eighth?

MARTA KOSTYUK: It's not even an eighth. It's an eighth of your life. So you have to make sure that to feel fulfilled, every time you go back home that you're fulfilled. This has been my biggest goal. It still is.

So, you know, if I will get a Grand Slam at the end of the day, I would be very happy, you know. I just hope I can embrace it and do other things on top of this, you know.

Yeah. I mean, the journey is long, but I'm here for it (smiling).

Q. If I can ask you to put your tactical cap on, what is it about playing Coco Gauff that makes her so difficult to beat? Feel free to be as specific as possible.

MARTA KOSTYUK: She has very tricky serve. I don't think she served really well throughout the whole match except in the second game of the third set. Yeah. Then, you know, then it's tough.

I think she's an incredible mover, so it's like you really need to work for every point to win it. I mean, backhand obviously is her strength. I mean, it's good. It's really good. She's not missing much from the backhand.

You really need to pick which shot you're going to play there, because it has to be sharp and it has to be different. You know, you cannot just play there and, like, Oh, okay, I wait. Let's see what's gonna happen.

Yeah, I think she's much better at the net. She comes very close to the net now. I didn't lob her once. Ah, once

I lobbed her. Was not enough, definitely. Yeah, she's very close to the net. She covers the net much better than before, I think.

Yeah, I don't know. I think, I mean, we had a very good match, so it's tough to say, you know. But yeah, I think she's just growing in certain things. Keeps growing. Is good.

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