

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Jelena Ostapenko

Press Conference

J. OSTAPENKO/Ka. Pliskova

6-4, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You must have felt fantastic out there. Is the 2017 Jelena coming back?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, I think I was playing good today. I knew it was going to be tough match, so I was like trying to be very focused all match. Just, like, playing my game. Also just try to keep the ball in play to make sure I'm not missing and making too many unforced errors. But when I had the chance I was going for it.

I mean, obviously I knew she's a great player so it's going to be a tough match, but I think I played well today.

Q. You have always been someone who loves the dropshot and uses it very well. Some players don't like it, don't use it, they think it's a panic shot. Why is it such an important shot for you? In these conditions these two weeks is it even more useful?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I think I was using them when I was a junior, but then sometime I didn't use them. I kind of forgot that I have this good shot, because I think I do good dropshots, sometimes winners, and it's tough for girls. I think in these conditions the ball is bouncing super low, so it's even tougher to like get it back. I think, I mean, today the first match I had some really good dropshots.

Q. Do you feel like you're a better player than you were when you won in 2017? If so, in what ways?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, it depends. I think I'm similar as I was playing. It's hard to compare because that was three years ago and I was fearless, nobody really knew me but now players get to know me more. Obviously they know me already (smiling).

They know how I can play. They know how to play probably against me. So I try to prepare very well for every match.



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Q. Today your point construction was very, very good and you had said in your last press conference that if you can stay a little bit consistent that's obviously a big difference for you. Curious from a coaching perspective and game plan going into today's match, what was your plan to do out there against Karolina? And also, can you kind of give some insight into what the coaching situation is at the moment and how much that maybe is helping you in Paris?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, I was just trying to play my game, but I knew I have to return well today because she obviously has, like, one of the best serves on tour. I think I was returning very well today. Also, I had to hold my serve, which I did pretty good, just once in the first set I didn't hold my serve.

But, yeah, I knew I have to do these things well and just try to maybe put as many balls as I can back and to make the points longer and if I have a chance just to go for it. Also, to use some dropshots, because it's a very good shot in these conditions.

And the coaching-wise, I'm with Thomas here. I mean, it's not really we are working on something because during the tournament not any coach is going to change obviously something. We are just discussing some things before the matches or at the practices but not really working on something, just like preparing for the tournament.

Q. The former WTA player now tennis commentator Sam Smith described your play today a bit like watching a Formula 1 racing driver where you go at 100 miles an hour all the time without fear. I would like to ask you, how would you describe your tennis style? And also, can you tell us a bit about your driving ability, as well? How do you drive and would you like to be on the F1 grid?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: Driving, you mean what?

Q. Yeah, she said the way you played was like an F1 driver, going at 100% all the time. How would you describe how you play tennis, and how would you describe how you drive?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, obviously like playing I'm aggressive player, but like today I was, like, I think very consistent. I didn't miss many balls and I didn't have many unforced errors. But I still had a lot of winners.



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Probably in deciding moments I was playing well and hitting some winners as well.

Driving-wise, I mean, I'm driving not super slow, not super fast. I mean, it depends where and how. But sometimes, of course, I have a lot of energy so I'm aggressive like playing aggressive in tennis and I'm very, like, how you would say, energetic. Sometimes of course I can drive a little bit faster, but, I mean, it just depends where and who is around (smiling).

Q. We know you as a very aggressive player who loves to hit winners. You have been making dropshots and making the point longer. How difficult has that been to put that into your game when there is always an opportunity to hit a winner?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: Girls are expecting me always to hit the ball so strong, and especially here on clay, as I said, it's useful because the bounces are much lower because it's much colder this year. I think it's very useful.

Even if I can't hit that ball, hit winners sometimes to mix it up and the girls don't expect it, so I think it's useful for me. Because sometime ago I just forgot about this shot but then suddenly in the practices I started to use it more and more. And obviously I think I hit really good dropshots, like very close to the net so it's hard to get them back.

Q. Obviously when people are talking about you or to you, asking questions and 2017 comes up very often, do you think back to that day very much, or is it all in the past now and it's a matter of just looking ahead?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, it was three years ago. Of course it's in my memory because it's the biggest win of my career so far, but I have to move forward and just, like, the world doesn't stop with winning only one Grand Slam. Of course I want to achieve more and I want to be back in top 5, top 10. Step by step. That's what I'm working on, my consistency.

Still being aggressive player, I think it can bring me a lot of wins but consistency probably in my game is the key.

Q. In your career, have you used a sports psychologist at all or often?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, I did work, yes, with some. Different ones. It's not easy to find a good one.

In general, like, before I was really against it, but then I tried and it kind of -- it's a little bit different, and I think it can help for professional athletes. Yeah, I mean, I'm working with some, yeah.

Q. Do you think looking back to 2017, do you think you're approaching that kind of form that won the title, or do you think you're a long way off from that?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, I think now I'm in a good form, and obviously these two matches I played really well. Also couple of matches in Strasbourg I played well. Slowly getting back in this form and playing some matches in this rhythm again.

But it's hard to compare with 2017. As I said, it was like three years ago, and I was much younger and also I was fearless. Nobody knew me. But now it's a little bit different. I'm just trying to get back and get my consistency. I think that is the key to bring me a good result.

Q. We don't often see top singles players playing doubles much. I'm just curious how playing doubles helps you, if it does, and what do you enjoy about having that going on in addition to the singles during a Grand Slam tournament?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, I started to play doubles when I was not like very high ranked. I mean, just couple years ago I was just playing doubles to get some more matches.

But obviously I think I play quite well doubles because it's not like my priority. My priority is still singles. So I'm not like getting nervous on some matches. I'm just playing loose. That way I play much better.

I mean, it's good also to use it as a practice, to return, to serve, to play some volleys. Because it's a bit different from singles but still it's a match and you can have some like advantages. You can take some advantages from that.

Yeah, I mean, I enjoy it when you have a good partner I enjoy playing doubles. Also having some fun on court.

Q. Do you have a good partner now?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: Yeah, we play with Gaby, I think really good together. We won title also, and we played some finals. I mean, she's a really nice girl, so it's nice to be on the court with her and play some doubles.

Q. Before the tournament you were talking about, and I know you have said this before, about how your win here obviously inspired a lot of the younger players to go on and win slams. Naomi Osaka has been very vocal about that. She said specifically your win was quite inspiring for her. I'm wondering what that has felt like for you to kind of be the first to run through the door and then to see Barty and Andreescu and Osaka win slams. Has it created more pressure for you? Has it inspired you? How

do you handle that?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, for me it was, beginning was tough to deal with all this pressure which was on me because obviously I was the first one from like the year 1997 to win a Grand Slam.

Yeah, I felt like kind of girls started to play better after that. Especially Naomi, she's such a good player. Yeah, I mean, I think maybe that inspired them, and they saw that it's possible. So young generation is coming.

I mean, when I saw her winning, of course I also want to get back there on top and win another Grand Slam. So we kind of have these like, I don't know how you call it, inspiring each other, the new generation, which is also I think good.

Q. Coming back to your answer about sports psychologist, it's an area that fascinates me. I wondered why you said at first you were not really thinking it would be a good thing for you or it would help.

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, because I think the human has to deal like with himself, with your nerves and stuff. But it's like not the psychologist can really change something. He can kind of maybe give you the way how to do it or something, but it's more like every human is like doing it himself.

So it's not like you go and then everything suddenly will change. No, it's big work you have to put in. It depends. If you cannot do it yourself, it's not bad that somebody is going to help you. I think it's a good thing just to show you the right path.

Q. Just going back three years. Sorry if I have asked this of you in the past. I'm curious to know where you have the Roland Garros trophy and how often do you look at it?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I have it in a tennis club where I always practice. It's under like the glass, under the glass window -- not window, how you say, kind of the stand where there is a Roland Garros team. So it's staying there.

I mean, sometimes if I walk by, then I can see it. But not like I'm going to look for it or check it like every day (smiling).

Q. Just looking ahead to the next round, you could play another former champion in Sloane. Both have tough starts to the year. Some reasons more than others. How do you approach that match, and how has tennis helped you recover from that start of the year that you had?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, it's not going to be an easy match. Here at the French Open I don't think there is any easy matches. It's going to be I think another tough match.

I know that I have to play my game, and just to stay aggressive. Also play smart sometimes which helped me like today and the day before. Yeah, more just focusing on myself and playing my game. If I'm gonna play my game, I think I have all the chances to win.

Q. The last part of my question was just going to be do you feel or do you think that players feel there is a stigma attached to asking for help with psychologists, that it's a bad thing almost?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: What did you say?

Q. Stigma. Do you feel like it's a weakness almost to have to ask? Is that what you were talking about?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I think, yeah, I think some -- like not in general, like athletes. I think like all the people in general think that it's like a weakness if you ask somebody to help you.

But I think it's not. It's just like showing the right way. Why not you can use somebody's help? If it's working, why not?

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