

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Heather Watson

Press Conference



ROLAND-GARROS

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Just tell us how you have been form-wise since the Fed Cup and what your chances are on clay this week.

HEATHER WATSON: Yeah, it's been a sort of tough couple of months or month or so for me. I have picked up loads of different injuries. You know, my schedule was to play pretty much most weeks over the clay, but I have just -- not big injuries but ones that caused me to stop practicing for three, four days, recover from that, and build up practice again. I just haven't really been healthy.

But I have been doing everything I can to get as used to the clay as possible. I do really enjoy playing on this surface. I'm feeling really good in my practice the last few days in the lead-up to my first match.

Q. What have the injuries been? Do you trace that back to what happened at the start of the year with the long period of time you had to spend in your hotel room in Melbourne?

HEATHER WATSON: The injuries have been, I had two of the same injury in different places. I had a joint sprain between the spine and the rib, where that connects. So I had one high up here in Madrid. Literally three days before my match there. Then I had one lower down a week or two ago. And then also strained my infraspinatus in my shoulder. Something I'm not used to, picking up all these injuries. I'm usually very lucky, touch wood, injury free.

But, yeah, it could be many factors. You know, this year has been a weird one, same as last year. It could be so many different things, you know, like you said, all the quarantines and stuff like that. So who knows.

Q. You said the last two years have been weird. I mean, I wonder, how have you coped with it mentally, being in the bubbles all the time, all the regular COVID testing, the problems of international travel? Just wonder how you feel you cope with it mentally.

HEATHER WATSON: Yeah, it's tough times for

everyone. You know, there's not much you can do about it. You have just got to be as safe as possible.

Personally, I'm such an outgoing person. I love to be busy. I love people, spending my time with people. So I've struggled with it personally, especially on the road because all the things I love about being a tennis player, you know, being able to travel the world and see cities and the fans. For me, the fans are one of the biggest reasons I love to play tennis. To have that taken away, it's not been as enjoyable for me personally.

Q. Are there things that you have taken with you around the world because of this inability to mix and go out? More books, for example? Do you watch more films? How do you cope with it?

HEATHER WATSON: Yeah, I've pretty much completed Netflix, like, twice (smiling). I'm not much of a reader, but I really try to, so I bring a book everywhere I go, but I never read it (smiling). That's not great.

I have brought a lot more exercise equipment for my room, for, you know, the quarantine periods as soon as we get to a tournament, particularly obviously because I've been getting injured so much recently, which I'm not used to. So it's been really frustrating.

Yeah, like, the foam rollers which I never used to bring a foam roller. All my bands and different workout gear. And also, I've stopped bringing casual clothes. I have no casual clothes anywhere I go, so my suitcase is a lot lighter.

Q. How are you feeling about the Olympics? I think you have often used it as a motivation at Roland Garros. You're pretty close to what we think the cut line might be. Is that a big incentive for you or do you have any reservations about traveling to Tokyo at the moment?

HEATHER WATSON: Oh, it's a massive incentive for me. I've always been very open about saying how important the Olympics is for me. I would be absolutely buzzing to be able to compete in a third Olympics. So that, for me this year, is probably my No. 1 goal.

Like you said, I'm on the border, I guess, so I've got to keep my fingers crossed and do as best as I can this week. Yeah, I would love to go. I would even go just for doubles. That's how much I want to go.



Q. To clarify, you'd be up for doing singles, women's singles, and mixed doubles in Tokyo?

HEATHER WATSON: Oh, everything. I'd want to do everything, 100%.

Q. How is Bromley? Have you been watching Bromley more interestingly in the last four or five months?

HEATHER WATSON: Last game today. It is a nail biter. There is about five teams in contention. I will be watching all the scores today to see if they make the playoffs.

Q. So it could be Football League football next season if they make it?

HEATHER WATSON: Yeah, hopefully. They'd have to make the playoffs and then win the playoffs. It's still a lot of games.

Q. You have had to get creative during lockdown and quarantine by dancing. You've been producing TikTok videos. I was just wondering, do you think how well you play on the court directly relate to how well you cope with the situation off the court, or can you just box them up as slightly separate things? Just touching on the dancing, would you like to compete in "Strictly Come Dancing" at some point in the future?

HEATHER WATSON: Oh, my goodness. Well, yeah, I think my life and my happiness levels off court do have a direct correlation, reflection, on my tennis. I think, yeah, it's really important that I feel happy, stable, and stress-free in my personal life.

I'd like to think, like, years ago that I could separate it, but you can maybe for a week or two but in the long run you can't. It's just exhausting. That's really important for me to just be happy.

Yeah, I think the TikToks and that only come out during quarantine. Apart from that I literally forget the app even exists. It's when I have nothing to do.

"Strictly," who knows? I'd be up for it, but not now.

Q. Wonder what you made of Naomi Osaka's decision not to do any press conferences at this tournament. I wonder, you know, she said that they can have a damaging effect on her mental health. Have you ever felt that? Does being grilled by us have an effect on your mental health?

HEATHER WATSON: Firstly, on her decision, I see from both sides on this, like, I'm really sitting on the fence with

this, because it's hard coming in press straight after a match and when you feel crap. I've broke down a few times crying. As you all know, I'm pretty emotional.

It sucks, but I do think it's really important to speak to the press to -- what's the word? I have lost it. To like publicize our sport, to help our sport grow, it's so important. She's such a big person in our sport, and I'm sure there are so many kids that will be watching her at Roland Garros and little girls and they'll really look up to her and want to know what she's feeling and thinking.

But, you know, we don't know what Naomi is going through. She could be having a really hard time at the moment or whatever it may be, on the court, off the court, whatever. So we have to respect her decision, and she can make that decision. So we just have to, I think at the end of the day, just respect that we don't know what people are going through.

Q. On the injury, do you require surgery at some stage, do you think? Is that a possibility you'd have to consider on the back, or is it not that bad?

HEATHER WATSON: Oh, I hope not. I've always had niggles with my back, so, like, my flexibility is horrendous. That's quite normal for me. It's just the fact that it's been three injuries in a row.

But like I said before, it's an unusual year, unusual circumstances, you know, routines are different. Usually when I travel here to France, I'd straightaway get on the practice courts, it's only a couple hours on the train, and get the body moving.

When things hopefully get back to normal, hopefully my little niggles will stop.

Q. I notice on Instagram you put the braids up for popularity, if you like. Is there an inspiration? Is there someone you have been inspired to have the braids, any particular tennis player or musician or someone?

HEATHER WATSON: Well, I can't believe I've never had it done, especially as a Black girl, I can't believe I've never had braids. You know, my friends, all of my friends have had it done, and when I say it's my first time, they're like, What? But I actually love them. I don't care what the poll says. I'm going to keep them. I think this is me for the long term now. I'll be coming out with loads of different hairstyles.

Q. I remember Roger Federer saying once that he actually found a postmatch press conference could be good for him, because he would think about the match and he could rationalize what went right, what went wrong. Do you ever feel that? Can it be beneficial to you?

HEATHER WATSON: I wouldn't say "beneficial," personally. I would just say that it's important to write about the bad times as well as the good, just like it's important to write about the good times as well as the bad. I think it should be balanced. There's highs and lows in everything in life, and, you know, you learn a lot from what you read and see and experience.

So that's why I think all these movements now speaking up, making sure everyone has a voice, it's made a lot of difference in a lot of different issues.

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