

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Elena Vesnina

Press Conference

E. VESNINA/O. Govortsova

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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What did you make of the match and how happy are you with the win?

ELENA VESNINA: Well, yeah, I'm really happy to win my first match since three years ago, and it was great to be back on these courts. I love Roland Garros, I love Paris, and today was a beautiful day. I went on the court, and I was just enjoying myself on the court, and I was not expecting that it's going to be that easy, of course, like 1 and Love. I think I never had wins like that in my life in the first rounds of Grand Slams. So everything happening first time.

I know Olga for many years. We've been playing together at the beginning of our careers, so I've known her for many years and I know her game style, so it was actually good to play someone that you know.

Many girls on the draw, I was watching the draw, and I have no idea how they are playing. You have to scout. I went to watch some quallies matches on Friday, and I saw like 60, 70 percent of the new girls was playing really good. So I was like, it's tough. It's tricky to face a qualifier in the first round.

Q. Can you sum up what it means to you to win? Emotionally it must be a huge moment I would imagine.

ELENA VESNINA: It's really a big moment for me. I really felt inspired today on the court. I felt great. I was not putting any pressure on myself, first of all. Of course I was nervous because I was practicing, I was working hard on the court, and I played here three years ago, and it's a Grand Slam. It's always pressure, it's always nerves.

But this time I didn't put that pressure that I had before, so I told myself that I have to try to play my best, of course, but don't think about what's going to happen if you're going to lose or how you're going to play. It's like, it was tough at the beginning especially, but then when



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the score was going, I was in a zone that I really wanted to keep that zone. It worked well for me, and I'm really pleased and happy the way I played. But it's a special win for me.

Q. I was wondering what you learned from your first two matches and how you compare this form and this level to maybe a few years ago right before you stopped playing.

ELENA VESNINA: Right now it's a bit different, of course. I need time to get better. I need time to get faster because now I'm not in 100 percent form, physical form that I had a couple of years ago before the baby, because I start with doubles, my comeback. I was playing only doubles at the beginning. I thought it was going to be a good idea to prepare my body, because it's a match, it's pressure. Your body is getting tight, practice is different, matches are totally different.

I give a try in Madrid and Rome. I had tough matches against really good players who was playing really good on that day and on that tournament, so I wasn't that upset even after that loss because I knew that it's my first matches after the comeback, so I was not expecting that I'm going to go on the court on the masters tournament like Madrid and I would beat top-20 player like 3 and 3. I was expecting it's going to be tough; I might lose.

But I was happy the way I was building my game. Every single game for me was a win. Every single shot for me was a win because I felt like I'm improving my game, and especially on clay, I'm not a clay court specialist, you know that. For me even winning games and now winning a match on Roland Garros for me it means a lot because it's not my favorite surface, even though I love Roland Garros, always loved the tournament, but for me it's a challenge.

I was feeling proud of myself how I was improving my game and getting better and better every day because I arrived here quite late, as you know, with all these flight situations, so I didn't have much time to prepare, but you see it was actually -- now maybe I need to come in the last moment to the tournaments. That will change my strategy.

Q. Do you have a vision of where you'd like to be in the next year or so? This is sort of a new career for you almost. Do you have a vision of where you'd like to be singles and doubles and how you see that

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shaping up?

ELENA VESNINA: I see myself in singles and doubles. Like I said before, I tried to see how my body will feel only with the doubles at the beginning, and then when I had a couple of matches in singles and doubles, my body started feeling better. I was recovered better. But of course right now I'm not 17, 18 years old girl. I know that it's really hard for the body to recover when you have a tough match in singles and then you have to play doubles.

The most important thing is on the next morning, how you're going to feel the next morning. Right now I want to try, I want to give a try definitely. I feel like I can do that. It all depends on the body, like I said before, how I will recover, because if you're playing many, many matches, then you will see, maybe you will need to stop doubles or you will need to see what is going to work better for you, but right now I want to try singles and doubles, especially this is the Olympic year, so I want to try to play -- I will play mixed doubles here even. So yeah, we'll see.

Q. I'm not sure you're aware but the Grand Slam board just announced that they could possibly even default Naomi Osaka if she continues her decision not to speak with the press. I'm wondering as a veteran player, do you think that's going too far? What's your reaction, and how do you think they should handle this?

ELENA VESNINA: I think Naomi, she's doing a lot of stuff for the tennis, for the players, and she's thinking about mental health of the players. This is important, I think. I mean, she's young. Of course she wants to do it like straight, like young players, like young people. They are brave, they are straight, and "the revolution," you know, let's go.

Of course I think that your work is very important for us, and what you are doing for us, you are helping our sport to get better, to help people to know players better, to give the information to the people around the world about tennis, about Grand Slams, about the situation, and I think yes, after the tough matches it is tough to come to the press and to talk with you guys when you had a tough match and you had match points or something. Like times maybe you want to cry, right, sitting in front of you.

But this is kind of a part of your job, and you have to accept it. I mean, I don't think that it's a good idea to default Naomi for that because she did it in a good way. She wanted to fight for some kind of, I don't know, her thought, her psychology of her life because she's this kind of a player, and we have to respect that, as well.

Maybe she will change her mind on the next tournament,

but right now she wants -- she tried. She wants to try to fight for some point physical and mental part of the players after the matches, but I think in the future she might change her mind because the work that you do is really important, and I understand that totally.

Q. Obviously press conferences aren't always easy. You're someone who's been very good at it over the years. Is that an actual process? Is it just you like to talk? What was the sort of progression for you to becoming more comfortable with this process and maybe tips that you could give to others as far as becoming more comfortable?

ELENA VESNINA: When I was just coming to the tour, we had like rookie hours for all the young players. So when I was 17, 18, we had a talk with the WTA staff and they were explaining us why it is important, why you have to go to the press. For me it was quite clear. I got it quite easy, that this is part of my job and I have to do that.

I also had some tough moments when I didn't want to come, when I was feeling really, really sad at that moment that I didn't want to talk about the match. I just wanted to forget about that.

But then I was just saying to myself, it's going to be only like 10, 15 minutes, you just have to say that, and that's it. It's a part of your job. I was not pushing myself much. I know it was not easy, but at the same time I understand quite clear that I have to do that.

It's not like -- I was not thinking about fine, I was not thinking about don't go to the press conference or just like give it a go, but I was coming, I was doing what I have to do.

I know many of the journalists; I never had a tough time. Also I never had like tricky questions. Okay, maybe I had a couple of tricky questions, but you've always been very nice with me, always been asking like good, normal questions that you get after the tough loss, after the win, and I was trying to find a way to go through it.

Q. Back to your second-round matchup with Petra Kvitova, how good is it for you to have a really difficult test like that? Do you feel like it's the perfect thing, might as well jump into the deep end and see where you're at?

ELENA VESNINA: Yeah, Petra is a great player and I have so much respect for her. She is a great champion. Of course to play against her, it's a big challenge for me, as well. To play a top-10 player in a Grand Slam, it's always not easy. You have to bring your best tennis on the court and you have to show that you want to win from the beginning of the match.

I know that Petra had a tough match today. First round is always tough, especially, like I said, it's very tricky to play against the qualifiers that you don't know, you never played, you never faced each other. We played against Petra a couple of times, she beat me, and she knows my game, I know her game, so we'll see. It's going to be very interesting, and I'm really looking forward to playing her because I know Petra for many years. She's a great player, like I said before.

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