

Roland Garros

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Alfie Hewett

Press Conference

A. HEWETT/S. Kunieda

6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Many congratulations. It's great. You said after your semifinal against Gustavo it was your greatest comeback ever. What were you most pleased about today after making such fast starts in both sets?

ALFIE HEWETT: Probably that I could back it up. You know, after playing that sort of match against Gustavo, it would be a shame to not go into today and try and play better tennis. I think the quality dipped in and out of that last one, but today the quality was, yeah, one of the best finals I have played, just dealing with the conditions, dealing with the fact that it was a final.

I have played four or five recently, and felt very nervous and tense at the beginning. I felt like I came out of the blocks really well, and that was a big thing I was looking at.

To obviously come out there and produce some of the tennis that I did, off the back of the semifinal day that I had, really, really happy with.

Q. Well done. Another title in the bag. You're famous for your comebacks. You were ahead from the get-go, you were on top. I know it's something you have been working with Ben and even before you were working with Ben, with Stu before that, coaches before that, about trying to get yourself on the front foot in your matches. Is that something that we're gonna see moving forward, or are we still going to get a comeback?

ALFIE HEWETT: I don't think it's really in my hands, to be honest (smiling). 50/50. Of course it's one of those where you want to be ahead in every match, but it's tennis and the sport doesn't give you the opportunity.

I mean, if Shingo comes out and he hits four aces and forehand return winners you're 2-Love down and you might not have done that badly. So that's the sport.

The mental approach I take to either being in front or



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behind is really key. I have probably struggled maintaining my level when I'm in front in the past. That's been a massive emphasis I have worked with in terms of my psychology, because you've seen it plenty of times when I'm behind how I can switch it on. But actually when I'm 5-2 ahead or whatever, do I get complacent or do I switch off? I have kind of had a bit of tendency to do that in the past.

Today was really pleasing that when it really mattered, when I was ahead, I took my chances, I kept in front, and I took my opportunities.

Q. Congratulations. I just want to know what emotions were running through your head when you won, how you'd rate it, and what it means for you and everyone who has supported you? Just give us a bit of context.

ALFIE HEWETT: Yeah, it's a really strange one. I think I was quite composed. I think it's really difficult to not get too aroused when you're in a match like this. You're playing World No. 1 in a Grand Slam final. I've done it in the past where I've come out and my emotions are all over the place, I'm erratic, irrational. That can obviously have a real impact on the tennis and performance.

I felt like I wasn't too pumped, which even afterwards, normally I'm probably in tears and whatever. I'm quite calm about it. It's a job well done, and I know I'll probably have a good reflection later on.

This is a major, and any title means a lot, because this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be here. And to compete at Roland Garros and with my circumstance, as well, whether there is a future or not, every tournament means a lot to me and my family and then also to my team, as well. They put in ridiculous amount of hours. They gave above and beyond for me.

And obviously winning kind of is not just me. It's for those guys as well. Because they put in, like I said, so much heart and care into my programs. I can only thank them for that.

Q. Congratulations. You hit amazing backhand like topspin and also down the line. Also Shingo, also he's well-known as his backhand, especially going to the down the line. My question is, when you are hitting like a crosscourt rally or whatever with your backhand, do you feel like you can dominate against

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him or you can feel more comfortable when you hit a forehand against him?

ALFIE HEWETT: I don't think it's a secret that I have a big backhand and that it's my weapon. My forehand is something that can maybe sometimes come in and out of matches, but when it comes to crunch time, I can really back the forehand as well.

Shingo is someone that has the ability to hit a pretty awesome backhand as well. It kind of sets it up for a good battle and a good match between the backhands, you could say, because he has the ability to rip it both cross and line, and so do I. It's almost like a game of chess in that respect, who can make the first move and who can draw the other opponent out either wide or go for the riskier shot, which is probably down the line.

Today I was seeing it really well and I think I did well in spreading the play and moving him about. He started to do the same to me at 5-2. You know, I don't think I played actually that bad on a couple of games then, but he stepped it up another level and showed why he is the player that he is.

Q. Why the preparations, because you have had a longer preparation than you would normally get for this tournament, eight, nine weeks. I just want to ask you, because actually, despite the fact of being in a pandemic, there has been so much British success, including you with singles and doubles titles, Gordon's doubles titles, et cetera. What's that down to? Is that down to the amount of support you're getting from the LTA and stuff? What have they done to make sure that, to you guys, it just feels like it's a normal tennis calendar, even though it's not?

ALFIE HEWETT: Yeah, I think there is many people involved in my setup. Obviously I have my own team, individual team. And the LTA are overseeing that and they play an important role in overlooking what we do and chipping in when they can, the NTC where they are all kind of based most weeks as well.

I felt like I get a good bit of balance between my own team and them coming in and taking control from their professional side, as well.

I spent a long time, like you said, I think it was nine weeks from Loughborough to here. Had to schedule, had to structure it, had to work hard and plan very specifically because it's a long time and we don't really get that opportunity to train for that long.

It's almost sometimes a bad thing because playing matches is why we are here and why we get so pumped, and we haven't played a match for so long you kind of lose the mentality of what it's like on a breakpoint or what it's like in the start of a game is such a difference

between competition and training.

So trying to replicate that in training is difficult. You know, we have to be smart. I felt that we absolutely nailed it. I came into this tournament not having a single day off in nine weeks, which previously was a bit of a challenge with my injury-prone body. Obviously very, very happy with that. I'm feeling good now.

I played a warmup event last week and then played a lot of matches this week. Going to head to Nice tomorrow to play another one. That's a good sign (smiling).

Q. You have just won Roland Garros. I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but you just won another award within the last hour as well, the esteemed tennis journalist Ben Rothenberg has just awarded you the best-dressed tennis player at Roland Garros award. I just wanted your reflection on that.

ALFIE HEWETT: No, I have seen him tweet quite a lot about my recent attire, so I'm glad that I've got an award. I mean, I'm slightly biased, of course. I do feel Fila's produced some of the best kit out there.

Of course it helps when you feel like you look good out there it's going to make you feel good. I can only dedicate this to my guys for their designs, because I think the tie dye and the clay was a great combination.

Q. You got silver medal at Rio Olympic Games and Tokyo coming in just a few months. What is your expectation or goal for yourself at the Paralympic Games? How is your preparation going?

ALFIE HEWETT: My expectation, no secret, I want to go there and win gold medals. I went to Rio Paralympics and brought back two silver medals, unbelievable achievement.

I feel like I'm playing really well, and I believe on my day that I can beat anyone. It's a very difficult task. You know, these guys in the top eight, they are incredible athletes who can turn it on on the day and anyone can beat anyone. You know, it's still a few months ahead of us, there is a lot to be played, a lot of tennis to be played. We have Queen's, Riviera next week, Queen's, Wimbledon, British Open.

I'm very excited for Tokyo. It's a long time coming. Paralympics is an incredible event to be involved with, and it gave me goose bumps just kind of looking back and the memories I had back in Rio. I'm just excited to head back there.

If it was to be a me and Shingo final, I think it would be some display and some atmosphere, which would be amazing. But, you know, the draw will be the draw, and whoever reaches the final will deserve it. And hopefully I

can put in enough training and play the sort of tennis I have done this week to give myself a good shot.

Q. I hear last year you have change your wheelchair? You make the seat a little higher than before? Is that right?

ALFIE HEWETT: Yeah, yeah. Not actually intentionally.

Q. Accidentally?

ALFIE HEWETT: So basically, it was a new kind of design that was the molded seat. So some of the players have tried the molded seat rather than the standard kind of backrest and chair itself. I just wanted to try it out.

I think we got the measurements a little bit wrong, so when I was in the chair, it wasn't the same and I was sitting a little bit higher, which helped for my serve, but I think it hindered my movement a little bit, because I was further off the wheels.

Obviously have changed that now, and I have found a bit of a compromise to what I feel is the best position for me to be in.

Q. You have already just mentioned about your busy summer coming up. Just tell me how exciting it's going to be to go back to Queen's and on the grass and you're the defending champion from 2019. How are you looking forward to that?

ALFIE HEWETT: Yeah, absolutely. It's an amazing event. We have been there a couple of times. Once I think for an exhibition and once playing there as a tournament.

To be on the site of the British public and to be playing on grass, which is a step forward for wheelchair tennis, is something I'm already looking forward to. This event has finished now, and I've still got a couple of events to be played, but I'd be lying if I said that Wimbledon and the grass court season wasn't in the front of my mind.

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