

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Piotr Sierzputowski

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Piotr is here, Iga's coach, to take some questions.

Q. No matter what happens for the remainder of this tournament, what would you say you were most pleased about in terms of Iga's development in 2021?

PIOTR SIERZPUTOWSKI: I think it's something which Iga was looking for, which is consistency. Like we coming here to Roland Garros, and I feel like she has almost no pressure. It's not about tournament pressure, it's like overall building from month to month that you are defending champion.

I'm pretty happy that she came here really prepared and she played better tennis than last year. I know that everybody's coming to the match right now like playing the best what they can because they know they have Iga ahead of them.

But still she's here. She's in quarterfinal, which is a great result when you getting through first week, getting to the next round. It's absolutely awesome. I feel like she improved in a lot of stuff, not only on the court but even off court.

Q. Regarding doubles. Why for Iga is it a good thing to be playing both singles and the doubles? Do you have maybe a guess as to why so many of the women who reach the singles quarterfinals also did so in doubles this time around? Not something we often see.

PIOTR SIERZPUTOWSKI: There is one player who is even playing mixed doubles and is doing great, too.

For us, I feel like Grand Slams, which takes 14 or 15 days, depends on the Grand Slam, are pretty long. Getting that consistency on everyday basis, it's not easy to develop on the practice. So coming to the match court, even if you're not going to do full warmup, even if you're not going to do full preparation, but you will go and you will compete, it's keeping you alive and making you play even better.

You have the space for letting your emotions go. It's not like you keeping that for the next day. Of course, you have to be prepared, you have to be aware of your body,



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you have to listen to your body. You cannot push yourself through the limits because it's for sure not going to end well.

Overall I think it's some kind of solution how to stay in the rhythm, how to make every day the same as the day before. Even if you win, even if you lose, you still have some routines. It's much easier.

Imagine waking up after match you won in the night, in the middle of the night, and you have to wake up in the early morning to make a practice. For me it's not easy to ask a player to do this. I know that they have to rest.

If she has to play a match, she is obligated to, so I don't have to ask her. That's her will to play. I think a lot of players coming with this kind of approach, a lot of coaches are thinking that way, but of course you have to be wise and you have to be prepared because playing for two weeks every day, it's not easy for anybody.

Q. Iga is still barely 20 years old, lots of room to grow. Was there a particular challenging moment that you had this season, something that taught you a lesson?

PIOTR SIERZPUTOWSKI: It was difficult overall at the beginning because you're coming back from great win last year. It was the last tournament you played. So the beginning of the season is uncertain. You don't know what is going to happen, if everybody is going to be prepared that well as you are. It's going to be the same way as you finish last year. There is a lot of things that are just wondering, not being sure. The only thing we've been sure is what we did.

We said like, Okay, there's all we can do. Let's try and see what's going to happen. I feel like first tournament in Australia, then Australian Open which was, like, really good tournament for Iga, and Adelaide. The beginning of the season showed her she's already at the spot where she can still improve, but she's not looking to catch up to anybody else. I feel like that was the most, let's call it, difficult part of the season.

Then after every week, every match won, because it's something what gives you confidence, not match when you lose, but overall even if Iga was losing, she had really good, like, inputs around that matches. She was aware what she did wrong and what she did good. She was able to open her mind and talk really, really wisely

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about it.

It wasn't like, I lost and I have to improve. Just improving for improvement is waste of time. What's going to happen if we going to improve the stuff which really works and we make all the time, put efforts to improve it even more. She's going to be better in this stuff but maybe there's stuff which is more important right now.

I feel like that the most difficult part of the season was just the beginning. Tournament after the tournament, she was getting better. I feel a little bit maybe second time was before the clay season. You defending champion of Roland Garros, playing great on clay. She played only seven tournaments on the clay. In three of those she got to the finals, won two of them. The statistics are too crazy for me even to talk about it.

That was difficult before, like if I'm good enough, if I can play that way. Of course, I feel that way on the practice, but let's go to the court and compete. I feel that what you don't know what's going to happen, expectations.

Q. Are how much impact do you think a tennis coach can have on the player? 5% or... Do you see yourself as the driver of a Formula 1 car, if you don't have a fast car the car isn't going to win the race? Does a tennis coach have a major impact on the performance of a player?

PIOTR SIERZPUTOWSKI: That's a great question. If I could answer that one, it would take me a long, long time.

But overall in simple words, I feel like it's all about planning and setting the goals for exact person, not for everybody the same. For example, I cannot plan for Iga the same schedule as somebody else for different player. You have to have a knowledge about the player.

That's why I feel more and more relationship, coach and player, is getting like longer, lasting longer right now. A lot of players trying to keep with the coaches, to practice longer than they did in the past. That's my feeling, of course.

Overall I feel as a coach that we have a great impact on that. But in the end we are not the ones who are going to the court, who are making that effort on the practice. We can do whatever we can, but in the end it's not if we win the match or not.

We can make everything to prepare a player and to organize the team and people around who supporting players to make it well. So I feel like it's much more than 5%, but I cannot tell you because it all depends on the player and the coach.

I feel like, for example, I love Nastia who is playing right

now a match that she is right now with her brother. She said it that she's right now not looking for a coach. She's good with it. It's just the awareness. She's showing you can go either way, doesn't matter.

You just have to be smart, you have to be elastic. You have to be really, really prepared for everything. If the player can do it by himself, herself, that's great. That means you are on the top level and you can compete with anybody, and nothing in your life going to stop you. That's a great example.

But overall it's always good to have people around who going to help you. For one player it's going to be 5%, for another it's going to be 45% or 50%, so you never know.

Q. The community of coaches. Tim Hill came through this press conference previously. He said you guys are quite close to each other. Not about this specific relationship or players, but in general when you coaches come to this kind of tournament, do you talk to each other, exchanging some information, or you try to keep some distances?

PIOTR SIERZPUTOWSKI: It's really excellent question. When I came here, I'm actually fresh on the tour comparing to other coaches, there had been rumors around that nobody talks with anybody. Everybody is tricky, take care of yourself because everybody going to try to make your life harder.

It was exactly opposite way. Of course, not everybody is social, not everybody want to socialize at all. But even I feel most introverted coaches like to talk because we travel a lot, we spend a lot of time out of home. In these tough years, we spent all the time with same people. It's really good to have somebody to talk, even 15 minutes.

I feel like coaches are doing a great job on the tour. I don't feel any bad emotions from them. I don't feel like somebody's trying to do something bad for you. Everybody is working for their players. But we are people the same, and we have to have our time.

It's great community. I love it. I love what WTA is doing, helping to connect coaches, which is absolutely amazing.

Q. Could you give some insight, Iga speaks a lot about routines. It makes us think she likes structure or needs structure. How is she going to handle when there's a lot more variables in play? At the same time it seems like you as a team are able to make adjustments quickly. Let's train in Spain, pick up and go somewhere else. How do you balance that working with a young player who needs sometimes structure while at the same time being flexible?

PIOTR SIERZPUTOWSKI: Iga needs structure. Like you said, she's the person if she doesn't have structure,

she doesn't work well. That's something which is like basic instincts for her, to have everything structure-ized.

Overall her creativity is crazy. Sometimes she just say, I want to go tomorrow practice somewhere else. Let's go somewhere where it's warm, where we can practice outdoors. Yeah, we have to be flexible.

But I think the most important part is about the relationship. You listen to your player and maybe you are sometimes as a coach, you have different approach, but sometimes it's time to sit at the table, talk about it, find the perfect solution, the balance. Like you said, it's the most important part.

This life is not easy for anybody. It's full of nice moments, but it's full of work and full of bad weeks. You have all this stuff which is around which is not easy, especially when you are young.

Having been structure-ized like you said, we try to keep lga aside from all of it. It's a little bit building let's call it a bubble in the bubble, but it working. I think it works for anybody, but it depends on the player who needs it.

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