

# Roland Garros

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Paris, France

## Marjan Cuk

Press Conference



**ROLAND-GARROS**

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Could you give us a sense of when you started working with Tamara and kind of what your reaction to her two weeks so far in Paris have been?**

MARJAN CUK: So I'm very happy what Tamara was doing till yesterday. From my point of view I enjoy the way how she was doing this. So the way that she's so relaxed, that she want to play, she want to compete, and that she's really strong. She know the way.

I'm just the guy who support her, so...

**Q. How about when you started, how you started with Tamara?**

MARJAN CUK: So I am the guy who manage her eight years ago, so we start at that time like a pro team. Zoran was a main coach, I was also coach. I was also like a guy who managed this our team. There was some other players, too, but Tamara comes as the best out from this team.

Many years we practice, we compete. We came from small Slovenia. We don't have wild card in big tournaments, so we must really to earn this way to come under 100 WTA.

For example, she win 17 ITFs at that time. We start 10,000, 15,000, 25,000, and so on. Now here we are top 100. First she was not believing that she's part of it. We are from small country, there is no so much history. But every month, every week was better and better. Now the things come together and here we are now.

**Q. What would you say in your opinion is the biggest weapon that Tamara has on court, a certain stroke that is the most dangerous?**

MARJAN CUK: You know, everyone is talking about her forehand. I agree, this is really big weapon. But my opinion as a coach is that she have five pistols always, so she can play forehand, we improved a lot backhand, she can do a dropshot, sometime she go to the net. Variety of the serve is also quite much better than it was.

So this is the weapons with which we do a tactic for next

opponent. It's not just one weapon. This is how I like it (smiling).

**Q. You said she's playing very relaxed. Do you think that's a function that nobody really expects anything of her at this point? She's 86 in the world, has nothing to lose. Is that the attitude you've told her to take?**

MARJAN CUK: So you guys, you know, the ranking is just the results of the previous tournaments. I believe and we know that her know-how of tennis is much better than 86. But somehow was some problems to show the tennis world that she belong higher.

Now we start to be a good team. Last two months particularly. We involved a lot of emotions in. She starts to follow. That emotions give her, like I said, freedom, and she start to enjoy tennis. She start to enjoy, practice hard. It's not easy when you go every day do mostly the same thing, you know?

Our job as a coach or mental coach or physical coach is to be relaxed, to show her it's fun. This is the best things what's we give to her and what she takes.

**Q. Speaking of those positive emotions and the positive vibes of your team, yesterday the cameras caught you all dancing in the gym together. Is that kind of what you mean in terms of shifting the energy of the team in the last couple of months to where Tamara seems very relaxed even though she's doing something maybe she didn't think or anybody thought she could do before?**

MARJAN CUK: Yeah, I think you're right. This is the thing where tennis is so important, but it's not the only way, you know? We must spend whole day. How to do it? Just to talk about tennis? You get tense then. So there are many things.

We are mostly, yeah, very positive. We enjoy every moment of life. Why not? We are not turtles that we live 220 years. Let's enjoy it, c'mon.

**Q. Most of Tamara's ITF titles came from clay, 14 of the 17. She won one 25K, both on clay. She performs better on this surface. Are you surprised she's in the semifinals of a Grand Slam at this age? Were you expecting this? Was it a dream?**

MARJAN CUK: Yeah, that I'm surprised? I cannot say that I was surprised. There was a wish because I know she play really well on clay, that she have a game for clay, but that she will come so far away. It's nice feeling, you know.

I was not expecting when it's going to happen, but I knew that she have a weapon, she have a possibility to come very far away in the draw, in the tournament.

Is going to happen now. Let's enjoy (smiling).

**Q. Facing an opponent like Anastasia who is far more experienced, what are your thoughts on that matchup? What are the challenges she will face?**

MARJAN CUK: So I can just say respect to her. She was beating really big players now here. But after long yesterday day, when I have dealing with Slovenian press and everything, I was going to sleep at 3 in the morning this day. At 7 I wake up and I already do till now, till one hour ago.

Saw a scan of her. So the best thing and logical, not the best thing, you know. So let's neutralize the best weapon of her and put Tamara's weapons out in front. This is my job. If it's going to work, we're going to see tomorrow. Till now we were very successful in tactics what we brought to her, what she was capable to do on the court.

**Q. Can you give us an idea of what Tamara's personality is like with the team behind the scenes? What makes her the way that she is, special, that has allowed her to build the career she has and get a result like this?**

MARJAN CUK: First of all, she's very natural. She's from normal Slovenian family. She's raised well. She's very polite girl. She knew what she want in her life, so it's pretty easy to go with her because the most important is one thing, yes. The last month she starts to speak more deeply with us. All the feelings are coming out.

With that feelings we can then guide, we can listen to her. Not just our opinion, do this, this, this. We start to listen. That was a very good - how can I say - feeling and put us as a team very deep.

So I'm happy that she's like this. Like I said, she's a normal girl from small Slovenia. I know now she's playing for herself, for team and whole crowd from Slovenia. Story, she want to be a psychotherapist, mental coach.

She said, we approach to her, Look, you are study this one, but now you can be a mental coach for whole Slovenia. If you go to the court and you show the strength and you show the people that I'm here to fight, they will follow you. So you are a mental coach for two

million people in Slovenia. That was our way, no?

She was looking and said, Wow, this is the thing. Yes, now I understand a bigger picture, not just small one.

**Q. Speaking of Slovenia, you keep mentioning small country, two million people, amazing sporting achievements. We'll put the question to you that we put to any Slovenian athlete, what is in the water? What is the secret for such a small country producing so many great athletes?**

MARJAN CUK: My opinion, we are a little bit, from history, part of Austria-Germany, and we are part of Yugoslavia. We take some things to be serious, to get discipline. For northern countries, for Yugoslav, they are more relaxed. Tomorrow, manana. You are serious, but in the same time you can dance. So both things.

If we can manage this one, I think it's pretty good combination so...

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