

Roland Garros

Sunday, 28 May 2023

Paris, France

Karolina Muchova

Press Conference

K. MUCHOVA/M. Sakkari

7-6, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Karolina, great win today over Maria. Just talk us through your thoughts on the match and what you think you did particularly well.

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: Thank you very much. Yeah, tough first round. I tried to basically play my game.

I knew what to expect from her. We played last year I think twice on the clay. Actually, I rewatched some matches, and I just stuck to the plan to be aggressive, mix it up with slices, drop shots, yeah, to get her out of the rhythm.

It was a little windy today, so that changed a lot as well in the game. But, yeah, I'm glad I won in two sets.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Just what was your confidence level going into Roland Garros just both tennis-wise and also physically? I mean, kind of what was your mentality before the start of the tournament?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: My mentality? Well, I had a great run in Rome, so that for sure boost my confidence a little bit on clay.

I felt great in the practices as well. I played better in the practices than in today's match, unfortunately. But, yeah, I got some matches under the belt, so that helps. I felt pretty confident.

Obviously I knew I have a tough draw, and it's going to be a tough match, and it was. Yeah, I'm just, again, glad that I finished it in two.

Q. A lot of your top ten wins have come against -- or, rather, at the Slams. I'm just wondering, are you a different player at the Grand Slams. Is there a secret to peaking and performing well against these top players at these big events?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: There's no secret. I mean, it's the biggest tournament, and I like to play them, as well



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as -- I don't want to say I'm not focused on the other tournaments, but the motivation is bigger here on all four Slams.

Yeah, I think that might be it. But, anyway, anywhere I am I'm trying to play the best against top seeds and trying to get back my ranking as well because I think I could be at least seeded on the Grand Slam. That would help me as well. I think I'm getting there step-by-step.

Yeah, glad that I won today.

Q. How far along would you say you are in terms of form and fitness? Obviously maybe still a little bit in your own mind on the way back coming back, building your ranking? Are you exactly where you want to be? Do you feel like you're still building and growing your game?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: I'm for sure building. Since the start of the year, it's going great. I'm the type who wants everything, like, in a minute, but it's not the case. I need to be patient.

We know it with the team, and I think as well I changed the team a little bit. I got back with my coach from three years ago. We start to work again a little bit differently on my game, and I think the work is -- I'm very happy for it, the way we work.

What I need the most is the matches and these kind of matches. As well, my body to be in one piece to get where I can be hopefully one day.

Q. Can you elaborate on the coach you mentioned? Because you mentioned working with Kirsten Flipkens, with Mats on the court. Can you talk about your team? What are some of the changes you've made?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: Well, he mentioned it. Kirsten is not my coach. She flew here today this morning, so it's not like she coaches me.

Yeah, my coach now, Emil Miške from Slovakia. Yeah, basically with him I got at my highest rank, what I had, I don't know, three years back or two years back.

He is very creative. He I think connects well with my game, with the way I want to play, and then the practices are smart I would say.



It's not like he pushes me into something. It's almost like I coach myself. He lets me do stuff. We talk a lot, and it's very creative. I like that.

Q. When exactly did you reconnect with him? Was it during the period you were still out?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: We reconnected end of the last year.

Q. Last question from me. You're no stranger to injuries, even from your junior days. You've been in and out of the tour. Is there ever a silver lining, something that is positive about being out of the tour? Maybe you rest, refresh, kind of rediscover your joy for the sport type of thing?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: Depends what injury I have, if it's big or just something small and I know I can handle it in a week or two.

Yeah, I mean, even without injury, I like to here and there take some time off tennis and have time with my friends and enjoy home and family.

When I'm injured, it's not a happy day with the tennis and still the rehab takes a lot of time. I would say even more than when I'm practicing.

But, of course, I like to as well spend some time away from tennis. I like that.

Q. I guess you know that almost 15 percent of the top 50 is from Czech Republic.

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: I didn't know it in the percentage, but now I do.

Q. I want to have your opinion on the current situation and the level of the players from your country?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: The level, as you mentioned, it's amazing. Still, youngsters are coming up. Everyone is kind of into it.

I see so many players, so many players from Czech here. I think we've got two girls qualified here, yeah. So I'm very happy for them. It's great to see.

I don't know what else to add to that. There are still many players going to come, I think, the youngsters. It's great.

Q. All of you are from very different regions in the country. How do you explain it? Its control, history, maybe other reason?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: I think it might be parents mostly, usually. They are taking care of their kids, especially of the girls. I think they can see that we can achieve it, we can be here, so it's possible.

I think it's mostly about that. Usually what I see around it's the parent who takes care of the kid and really want them to be a good tennis player. Then they just go for it.

Q. Last from me. What is the atmosphere between all of you on the tour? I don't know, many dinners together?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: Well, yeah. With some I get along better. With some, not that I don't get along with them, but I don't meet them that much.

When we play Fed Cup, it's nice. We do the same job. So it's not that we have so much time when we are on the tournament, but if we have some time, yeah, we always connect a little bit.

Q. Did you watch much of Justine Henin when you were growing up at all or no?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: You know, some people actually told -- actually, my coach now, Emil, he really likes her, and he likes the aggressive style and going for it. So I watch some videos.

Not that I really watched her when she was still on tour, but I saw some videos. I like the game as well.

Q. Just quick follow-up on that. What do you see when you see her play, when you watch those videos, that impresses you, I guess?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: The smart play, I would say. Smart and aggressive. She's not so tall and still she could play so well against the big players. You could see the way she moves. That's very impressive.

Q. You had to wait very long because there was a game before of five sets. How difficult is it for you as player, and when did you start warming up because after two sets Lestienne leads by two sets, but then the match turned around.

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: Yeah.

Q. How did you do that?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: Well, I was actually surprised by the first set. I don't know Lestienne much, and I thought it's going to be for Khachanov maybe 3-1 or something like that.

So I was surprised by the first set. Then I napped all second set, so I don't know about that. I was out.

Yeah, then I started to a little bit with the mobilization, and we were watching so that he was not -- that he was getting some treatments on court.

So it was okay. I mean, we were together with the team. I started to move a little bit and waited and got some food. It was cool.

Q. How do you do that with the food? Maybe you have to wait one hour or maybe two or three hours?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: Yeah, I get the food right when they started, like bigger portions. Then just some snacks, yeah, like a banana or a sandwich. Just when it was, like, 2-1, and he got a break for 2-2, and then I got some snack and not such a big amount of food anymore, but just to, you know, keep me alive.

Q. How about the mentally focus because it's difficult to be focused for three hours or just for one hour? How do you do that?

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: Well, I didn't do it so well today. I started this match pretty slow. It's tough. I'm still working on it.

I don't have any key to that yet, but yeah, trying to get there. Just focusing on it point-by-point and doing routines.

Q. Before if you have to wait that long.

KAROLINA MUCHOVA: Oh, well, I have some music in the headphones, and that's about it.

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