

Roland Garros

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Anastasia

Pavlyuchenkova

Press Conference

A. PAVLYUCHENKOVA/L. Fruhvirtova

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THE MODERATOR: Anastasia, can you share with us what made the difference today.

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: Well, first of all, I came back here after being off last year, so I for sure knew that I want to stay as long as possible here because, I mean, it's a special Grand Slam for me, especially after making final two years ago.

So not being able to play because of injury last year. I came probably today on court for sure to win. No matter what I said to myself, I'm staying (laughing). I think that made the difference, first of all.

But, at the same time, I'm happy with my performance because, of course, the nerves were there. I kept calm. I was also pretty calm. I mean, it was a perfect match for me today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You mentioned two years ago. Of course, an incredible tournament for you then. If you could point to one memory in particular that sticks out in your mind from those two weeks, what would it be?

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: The final match on center court. That's probably for sure the first one that comes to my head because, yeah, it was very special for me.

Obviously, all of us, me, my goal is to be there as much as possible. To have those moments, that's why we are working so hard. That definitely was a special one. Still stays in my head.

Q. If I could ask a question about that match, what I guess in particular do you remember about the match itself, how Barbora played and what she did particularly well that gave you trouble, what you thought you did well that day?



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ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: Yeah, that's an interesting question. Also looking back, thinking a lot about those matches, I actually don't like to go back and think or review those matches in order not to stick to the past a lot, but it's just for me to grow a little bit. I've watched obviously after some highlights. There are a lot of things that I thought, okay, I could improve, but when you go out there, it's kind of too late.

You have to play. You have to be quick. You have to make quick decisions. Especially first final of a Grand Slam. Of course, a lot of stress and nerves. That plays too.

Yeah, I think I could have been more aggressive maybe. Obviously started the first set better because she won it too easy. It was 6-1 to her. Then maybe I could have went for it more in the third set, for example.

Now it's hard to say, but there are definitely a lot of things that I thought I could improve in my game for the future, which I'm actually trying to do now.

My goal is not only to come back to tennis and just participate. I obviously want to be a better version of myself than even when I was two years ago in the peak of my career. So that's my goal now.

Q. Can you take us back to maybe the emotions you felt last year when you finally realized that the knee was not in good enough shape to continue and you would have to kind of miss Roland Garros and call it a season and what you went through emotionally through that period.

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: Yeah, it was a roller coaster of emotion because I was sad. It was almost like -- yeah, I was close to cry actually, but also sad because I wasn't sure what's after, you know. I wasn't sure what if there were also thoughts, like, okay, what if I will never come back? Or if I skip that long, because I've never done it, which actually happened, almost a year, what if I will, yeah, never win a match or never be back in good shape? What if that's it, you know?

There were a lot of doubts, but all I knew for sure that if I were to continue, that was the only way because I was completely out of shape also because I couldn't work hard at all because of my pain.

I barely could jog or walk or sit down. It was just painful



all the time. So that was definitely not -- that was not a knee for a professional athlete. I had to make that decision. I had to go for it.

So, yeah, there was no other way.

Q. Can you briefly tell me some of the details of what you went through from last May until the end of the season, how you got yourself back to good health. Was there a surgery? Was there a lot of rehab? How difficult was that process?

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: There was a lot of rehab, but most importantly, I had to skip practice. I just had to stop because every time, obviously, on the impact I had a lot of pain. So I had to stop tennis completely.

So I didn't touch my racquet for I think five months. They didn't let me. Like, the doctors, I was begging them to just let me sit on the chair and hit some balls. My doctor in Munich told me, No, no, no, I know how you guys do it. You sit for two minutes and then five minutes after you are running like this. He is, like, No, no, no.

Yeah, there was zero actually -- not a lot of physical activity, to be honest. I was completely out of shape mid last year. In November slowly I started to finally do something.

Still now I feel much better now, but I feel like still there is a lot of room to improve.

Mentally, physically it's not easy, but I'm fighting and also encouraging myself and actually proud of myself just being back here and winning today and participating.

Also, yeah, I just have to keep on believing, I guess.

Q. Did you watch a lot of Roland Garros last year or watch a lot of tennis while you were off?

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: No, I couldn't. Yeah, I couldn't because, yeah, it was actually painful a little bit. Especially making finals two years ago, so I felt like last year was a perfect time to come and try to defend that finals or play. Yeah, I couldn't.

I just wanted to disconnect from tennis completely and wasn't really following much at all.

Q. Having that time off, though, did you get to do things that you ordinarily wouldn't be able to do because of the tennis calendar?

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: Yeah, yeah. It was actually very nice because I'm very outgoing. I have a lot of friends, so I was actually in Paris during French Open.

Then because my friends flew to Roland Garros to watch

me normally, so they planned it, and I'm almost last minute I withdrew. I stayed with them, and we did a lot of things that we wouldn't be able to do.

So they actually said, It's funny, we're actually happy you're not playing. Because then it's like normal and we been completely outgoing and doing things.

Q. Just on the match today, what was it like psychologically your coming back and you're up against a player that was in your position, that young hotshot teenager? How did you balance that, and how much did you know about Linda?

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: Well, I was super focused on myself. I just said to myself, okay, look, if I want to be back to my good form and winning, I mean, I have to go and keep winning. I have to work and win matches and show that, okay, I'm there.

Yeah, just focused on my game. Of course, I didn't want to lose the first round. I wanted to stay here as much as possible because, again, as I said, it's a very special place for me.

Yeah, I'm happy it worked today.

Q. Slightly off topic question, but a lot of these younger players were not around when Maria Sharapova kind of became the clay court player that she would eventually become. Many of them remember her as a grass court specialist in a way. Then, as somebody who was around at the same time, I'm curious what you made of kind of how she evolved her game into being one that was so successful here at Roland Garros?

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: Well, first of all, Maria Sharapova, she's Maria Sharapova. For me it's just like in tennis or every sport, there are some special athletes who you have, and they will never be replaced or copied or, you know. So she's one of them for me for sure.

I think for me I always admired. I was impressed by her fighting spirit and character.

Dealing with -- I still believe all the pressure that she had and the attention, that was amazing. Also obviously that was also inspiring seeing her because she's very tall, so that makes it more difficult I think playing on clay. Just how she was always fit most of the time when she was playing, especially Grand Slams.

You could see she was trying to adjust and change her game. That's inspiring. Yeah, that's something I'm trying to also do and evolve and keep on because I'm very open.

I said to my coach, Look, I know I'm 30-plus now and not 18 anymore, but I am still open to changes basically because I know me coming back this year, I could feel the difference skipping almost a year off, the level of women tennis is pretty high and incredible.

I mean, every girl is hitting so hard. In Australia I was so late on every ball, and I was, like, damn, I'm so, so far away.

Yeah, I think that's also what I'm trying to focus on.

Q. I'm a Ukrainian journalist, and I want to ask you a question about all this handshaking situation between the players. The second question is: Last year you made this post about non-war post, that you didn't support it, and then you removed it. Eventually it turned out that your dad co-hosted this tournament after Wagnerites, which is illegal organization in Russia, who kind of died at war in Ukraine. Is it connected somehow your dad's position in that academy with the fact that you removed that post?

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: Well, the handshake situation, well, I really don't feel like commenting on all these things just because this has been too long now. I'm just here to play tennis, first of all.

Second of all, I cannot control what players do on court, like, if they shake or not. It's their decision, so yeah.

Removing that post, it was more with my PR also person who is helping me. That was her decision also.

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