

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Donna Vekic

Press Conference

D. VEKIC/D. Yastremska

6-2, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started. Donna, first question from me. Congratulations on your win today. You got your first win at Roland Garros of the year under your belt. What were your keys to the match today?

DONNA VEKIC: I was expecting a more interesting question from you (laughing).

It was a difficult match today, but every first round in any tournament is tough, especially at slams. I was definitely pretty nervous out there.

But I'm happy I managed to win in two sets, actually, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. We often will hear players say what you just did about the nerves of the first round and how difficult those are no matter who the opponent is. Why is that? I mean, this is something you've done a million times. Winning a first-round match for you is not a new thing. Why are there those feelings when you start off?

DONNA VEKIC: It's something I always wondered at the beginning of my career. Does it get easier later? But actually, it doesn't. Maybe it's even more difficult because I would say that at this point I have some more expectations for myself. I put more pressure on myself.

You know, I've had a really good preparation the last week, and anticipation just builds every day. So then when you actually come to the day of the match, of course, you are nervous.

I'm playing a qualifier. For me it's always been a terrible draw in my opinion because, you know, these players, they've won three matches. For someone who had to qualify here last year, I know how incredibly tough that is. You are just feeling the ball differently.

Yeah, so it was just a very tough match today.



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Q. About today's match, you were up early in that second set. She brought it back level. Could have slipped away and gone to three. What for you was the key, something strategic, something mental, to holding steady there and finishing it out in two sets?

DONNA VEKIC: I was just trying to stay in the moment actually throughout the whole match and not think too much what's happened, what's going to happen. Just really try to play one point at a time.

I was aware that I was a little bit too passive in the second set. I let her take control of the ball. When you do that with her, she's going to take control of the ball, of the points.

But I just tried to play a bit deeper, attack a little bit more. Yeah, I'm happy I turned it around after, yeah, getting broken back and serving to stay in the second set, yeah.

Q. I obviously think of you as someone that prefers Wimbledon and London. You've had good success at this tournament in the past. What sort of adjustments do you like to do to bring out some of your better tennis on clay?

DONNA VEKIC: (Laughing.) I don't know if it's very clay-specific, but we've been working a lot on my return the last couple of days because it's something that I've struggled to find rhythm so far on clay.

It's just I don't know if I should stay back, if I should come in. It's very clear for me on the hard courts, but I've been struggling a little bit more the last couple of weeks.

But for me it was really important those three matches in Rome that I played to get some rhythm, some matches on clay because, yeah, for sure it's not my favorite surface, but I can play well on it. I just really need to believe in myself. I think the confidence from Rome really helped me.

Q. Just talking about the expectations coming into this tournament, is that in light of the year that you've had so far or just where you are in your career?

DONNA VEKIC: I think it's just where I am in my career because I had the same in Australia, and I was not ranked as high as I am now, but I'm expecting a lot from myself, especially in slams. They are the most important



tournaments for me.

I try to be as fit and as healthy as possible for the slams. It's tough to actually at this point, you know, I'm only 26, but this is my 11th Roland Garros. So it's tough for me to, let's say, be 100 percent fit and healthy throughout the whole year, so I try to time it for the slams to make sure I have enough time off, I have enough preparation.

Yeah, today was a little bit easier to handle the nerves because I was expecting a bit more because the same thing happened to me in Australia. I was completely frozen out there in the first round (laughing). I was kind of expecting it today.

Q. I know you really enjoy preparing food and cooking. I've watched some of your YouTube videos. I would just like to ask: Have you got a signature dish? I was thinking maybe the Donna Vekic kebab could be a trademark of yours.

DONNA VEKIC: No, it's lasagna.

Q. How important is it for you to eat healthily? Do you get a chance to eat and enjoy food when you are in Paris? In terms of your tennis, what is a recipe to success for how you have approached the season so far?

DONNA VEKIC: Yeah, my trademark meal is lasagna. Actually this week we are staying in an apartment, so I haven't actually been out to eat, not once, but have been more staying at home and cooking, but not too much.

The recipe to success, I don't know (laughing). I hope I will find out these two weeks.

Q. Can I just ask about the kit. I feel like if you fell down, we might not ever be able to find you because it's so close to the color. I'm just curious what inspired it and what input you had on it.

DONNA VEKIC: Yeah, I really like the colors. I hope I don't blend in too much with the clay. But yeah, it's a nice color. It's very classic.

Q. Just how has the business been going, and how have you been balancing it over the last few months as your on-court schedule has gotten even busier?

DONNA VEKIC: Yeah, I've definitely been more focused with on-court stuff, and I let the team run things off the court.

Q. Just speaking of food and desserts and stuff, there's a lot of options in Paris. Do you have any go-to sweets or meals that you like to have when you are here?

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA: I actually haven't gone -- I went out to dinner one night. I've been here for a week. I've been kind of keeping it low, staying at home.

Borna came over a couple of times, so I cooked him dinner. Yeah, we were just taking it a bit more easier the last couple of days, but I'll go out to dinner tonight (laughing).

Q. What did you make for Borna?

DONNA VEKIC: Salmon.

Q. You have a positive mental attitude. You're always smiling, and you are trying to be upbeat. Is that something that you work hard on, or are you naturally positive? Do you think it's more of a challenge to stay positive when you are not always getting the results that you think the hard work and positivity deserve?

DONNA VEKIC: Trust me, I'm not always positive, but most of the time I would say, yeah.

Yeah, of course, it's not always easy to -- I would not say be positive, but be motivated to practice when things aren't going your way on the match court. But in those times it's important to have good people around you who know when to push you, how to push you, and I'm very lucky to have an amazing team of people around me who are there for me even when I'm having a good day, when I'm having a bad day.

Yeah, they know how to, I would say, deal with me.

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