

Roland Garros

Tuesday, 30 May 2023

Paris, France

Elena Rybakina

Press Conference

E. RYBAKINA/B. Fruhvirtova

6-4, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Elena, obviously never easy to take care of the first match at any Grand Slam, but how were you able to kind of work through the nerves today and take this first round?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, for sure, first matches not the easiest. Yeah, I didn't start that well. I was rushing a bit.

Yeah, after I started a bit better, so overall happy with the first match.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. It was difficult not to notice that in Rome you were wearing adidas and now you are no longer wearing adidas. Can you tell us what happened to the change and what was the situation with your former clothing sponsor and your new very nice outfit?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, I think everybody noticed that. Yeah, just happened here. But I'm very good with adidas brand. It just I think not the first time when the player changes.

As of today, I really like Yonex. Yeah, happy to continue with them.

Q. We know that you are a big animal lover, and we have seen lots of photographs with you caring for animals. Can you tell us what is it about animals that you like? Which animal do you think you move like on the court? And to develop your tennis career, how important is it for you to keep developing your own animal instincts to achieve more success?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Great question (smiling).

Well, I don't know which animal I would say. I just love animals, because I have also two dogs. Yeah, it's really nice, especially when I get time to see my dogs or just, yeah, walk with them, it's nice.

Yeah, about the second part of the question, not sure



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which animal I would say I move like (smiling).

Q. The general public discovered you here three years ago when you beat Serena Williams. I'd like to know how do you remember this match? Does it have a special place in your rise to the top of the tennis?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yes, of course I remember this match really well, and I was very nervous to play against Serena. It was actually a great match. Yeah, it was my first Grand Slam where I made it to the second week also, so I have great memories.

I would say just here it's a bit different now. I'm seeded, so everybody kind of wants to beat me. Back then I was not high ranked, so it's different.

Q. Curious what you made of the conditions out there today. It was mentioned before the tournament they were a bit slower than Rome, and I'm curious how you would compare the two.

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, I would say it's different conditions just because different balls also. Yeah, it feels a bit slower. It's more difficult to make a winner, I would say, today at least, what I felt.

Everything kind of returnable no matter how fast is the serve. I have to work a lot on the variation of the serve and also placement.

But, yeah, of course it is different also, the weather. Yeah.

Q. You mentioned when you played Serena how nervous you were, and you were still 19 maybe. Now that it's over and you finished winning the match, does it surprise you at all that a young barely 16-year-old girl was playing against you today and had a big smile on her face and did not seem nervous, at least on the outside?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Yeah, of course it's surprising. I think the generation is changing and there is a lot of young girls. 16 is quite young. I would say I was young just recently. Everybody was considering me.

But yeah, she plays really well, and if she continues like this, they have great team. She's going to be dangerous, for sure. She is already, yeah.



Q. You are a Grand Slam champion, one of the best players in the world right now, and also one of the favorites here at Roland Garros. But you keep telling us that you want to keep your feet on the ground and stay normal. Over the last few years, what has changed for you and what has remained the same?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, the goals are still the same, I would say, and of course I'm trying to improve every day.

As you mentioned, yeah, the results have been great in this year, but it's just the beginning. No matter the ranking, I will continue to work and improve.

We have so many tournaments, and of course you want to have good results on every tournament and you want to have this consistency. So this is what I'm working on, and I feel like it's still just the beginning.

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