

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Elina Svitolina

Press Conference

E. SVITOLINA/S. Hunter

2-6, 6-3, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Elina, congratulations on your victory today. How were you able to refocus after the first set when she came out playing so so well to start the match?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, it was a tough start for me. Storm was playing really well. She was striking the ball extremely well, and I had to really refocus and be more active in the second set.

Really happy I could turn it around and play much better tennis in the third.

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with English questions.

Q. Elina, a tough battle today against Storm Hunter. When you lost the first set, did it feel like you were caught in the eye of the storm? What did you say to yourself at the end of that set to make sure that the Hunter became the hunted?

ELINA SVITOLINA: (Laughing.) Well, I just tried to fight, tried to realize what I did not good in that set, tried to play a bit deeper in the court to make her move a little bit more as well.

So, you know, little things like that really helped me to focus on what I have to do and not focus on that I lost the first set. In the end it was just fighting and running and running again. Just try to make an extra ball. Yeah, it worked well. In the end I was feeling much better, the ball and the court as well.

Q. I wanted to ask you, were you a little tired from last night's match that Gael played? How long did you watch? How long were you up? Did that cause the slow start?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, it definitely didn't cause the slow start. I watched the whole match. I was up until midnight when the match was done and went to bed straight away. Actually, was sleeping good. Had a solid seven hours of sleep, which is quite good for the Grand



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Slam (laughing).

Yeah, it gave me actually motivation to go again today. He was there for me today. Made such a big effort to come and support me, especially in a tough day like today. So really it motivated me to fight and not give up and play every point, try to put 100% effort out there.

Q. How is it to live together this tournament, this French Open, Gael and you as a couple and as a family too?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Really special. Actually, yeah, first tournament for us where we are both playing at the same tournament, and Skai is here with us in Paris as well. It's really, really special.

So far everything is going well, and we really enjoy our time off the court together, and on the court as well we try to be focused and play as good as we can.

Of course, it's really important to have a team for Skai, who takes care of her, so then we can focus on tennis. And especially at such a big event with lots of pressure and lots of things going on, it's important that your mind is calm about your child and then you have 100% head into the tennis.

Q. I would like to ask about the situation at home. It's said sometimes even in war people get used to it. Is this something that you have in any way gotten used to it, or do you still feel an intense anger? When do you see it being resolved?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Of course, I talk a lot with my friends, with my family back in Ukraine, and it's a horrible thing, but they are used to it now. They are used to the alarms that are on. They're used to -- as soon as they hear something, they go to the bomb shelters. Sleepless nights. You know, it's a terrible thing, but they tell me that now it's a part of their life, which is very, very sad.

Also, for kids who there's lots of videos actually from -- today there's a girl where they are just running towards the bomb shelter across the street because like at noon there was some missiles going past Kyiv.

Last months being really tough as well across Ukraine. There was missiles all over Ukraine. Yeah, it's been actually really, really tough for the past months for Ukrainians.



Q. Do you have a feeling of anger, or at times does it seem like, say, a nightmare? Or just reflect.

ELINA SVITOLINA: Different days differently. Of course, I feel anger. I feel sadness. I feel pain in my heart to see all of that. I have a few Telegram channels where I follow the news of my hometown in Odessa, of all the Ukraine, and they post the news what is happening, when the alarm is on, or where missiles landed, you know, how many missiles were hit by our Ukrainian Army, Air Force.

These kind of moments I feel mixture of different feelings, but they are bad feelings. You know, they are anger, they are sadness, just heaviness. It's like this heaviness that I have on a daily basis, and all Ukrainians have. You cannot escape from this, and this is for the past one and a half years we have that in our life.

Q. My first question, I just want to clarify from the other day when you spoke movingly about people being caught up with words and that the focus should be helping Ukraine. Was that directed towards the news media or your fellow Ukrainian players or other people? Then, just my other question, picking up on what Bill said, when you walk onto the court, how do you clear your head of whether it's the war or even your child in order to focus on the task at hand?

ELINA SVITOLINA: So, answering your first question, it was for people and for media as well because sometimes, you know, I feel like in tennis media is making some articles just a little bit just for sake of it. You know, just for clicks. Sorry to say that, but it's true.

You know, if, I don't know, some player not from Ukraine said something, it's not helping. It's not helping Ukrainian people. It's not helping us so much in any kind of way. For us it's just, yeah, empty words, as I mentioned before.

In the second question about how I clear my head, as I mentioned, we are getting used to it. Our nature of people, we are getting used to the things, to the bad things, to the good things.

For me when I step on the court, I just try to think about the fighting spirit that all of us Ukrainians have and how Ukrainians are fighting for their values, for their freedom in Ukraine. And me, I'm fighting here on my own frontline, you know.

I cannot be sad. I cannot be distracted in some ways. I'm just going to lose, you know. So that's why I remember when the war started, I was in Mexico in Monterrey, and I was very, very sad. I almost cried when I entered the court. I had, like, really heaviness in me.

Then I thought, you know, now each time I step on the court I'm going to go 100% out and give everything because I'm here to do something for my country. I have a flag next to my name, so I'm fighting for my country, and I'm going to do that each time I step on the court.

Q. Again, not a tennis question. You probably know that Djokovic yesterday made comments about Kosovo, and this morning French Sports Minister reacted to this and said it wasn't appropriate. First of all, what's your take on that? Is that inappropriate, is that appropriate for an athlete to talk politics? And, second, do you feel that you can speak freely about politics, about anything you want basically as an athlete? Thank you.

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, we are living in the free world, so why not to say your opinion on something? I feel like if you stand for something, you think that this is the way, you should say.

I mean, if you are with a friend sitting, talking, you're going to say your opinion, he is going to say his opinion. So why not?

Q. Maybe on this, but it's a bit strange for Djokovic saying that "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia."

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, this I don't know the politics of Serbia. So if he thinks that, he thinks that, but I don't know if it's the heart of Serbia or not, so...

Q. It's an independent country.

ELINA SVITOLINA: I don't know, but, you know, coming back to the politics in sports, as I think all Ukrainians mention, that it's connected very much because we are all people. We all know the politics of your own country little bit, the way you hear something here, something there.

Me, personally, I have lots and lots of friends who are in politics or they ever been in politics, so I know, you know, I'm not expert, but I know a few things that are connected to that.

For me it's just part of human life, politics, sports, you know, different things. Yeah, it's like that.

Q. One question: Is there a hand of Raemon Sluiter visible in your game and your mindset? What did he add to your game? The other day you talked a little bit about the relationship you have. But tennis-wise, what does this bring? Because he had a double forehand. You still have a single one.

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, yeah, I still play my forehand with one hand. I'm not playing with two hands yet, but I

don't know if there is touch of his work there. Of course, we worked really hard on a few things on my game, and I think it's up to you to see I guess because, yeah, I'm just trying to do what he tells me to do. I believe in our work. I believe in what he says.

So far we have a good connection. We understand each other really well. You know, we have conversations about some different players, what they do good, what I have to improve. So, you know, these kind of conversations really gives me different perspectives as well on my game, so I'm happy with the work that we do together.

Q. About Gael, how is he today because his legs hurt and probably his entire body after the game? After what he has gone through this last year, good and bad, did you expect such a performance from him before a challenge tomorrow against Rune?

ELINA SVITOLINA: I'm happy of the match that he could win yesterday. He didn't give up in the end even though he was really struggling. I could feel even through the screen his pain because he was running a lot and with the stress, obviously, affects your fitness as well.

All this time where we were training together starting from January, him coming back from the injury, me from pregnancy, he was working really, really hard. I know how many hours he puts into this, and he wants desperately to come back to the level where he's been and working towards this goal slowly.

Of course, he is not 25 years old, and we could see that yesterday. The guy is 22; he is 36, but still, you know, with a lot of experience. I feel like he still has a lot of good matches, maybe similar matches to yesterday, in his bag. He is going to be back playing better I'm sure very soon just with a little bit more matches on this level.

Yeah, it's going to be exciting match against Rune. Hopefully not too late so I can come and watch and support him as well, but now he is recovering and hopefully will be ready.

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