

# Roland Garros

Wednesday, 31 May 2023

Paris, France

## Anna Blinkova

### Press Conference

A. BLINKOVA/C. Garcia

4-6, 6-3, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Anna, a huge win for you on Chatrier today. Just talk about how you got through that match, especially late in the third set and got over the line there today.

ANNA BLINKOVA: Thank you. I have zero emotions right now. The match was really tough, and she plays very well. In the beginning I got broken, and I couldn't get the break back. So I lost the first set, but I kept the positive, self-talk positive. I managed to just play point-by-point and stay in the present moment, and I tried to find solutions to win the match.

I just kept fighting for every point and doing as much as I can do. I'm so happy that I managed to stay mentally strong until the end and get the win, finally get the win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. I think a few years ago you were talking about you want to kind of see your tactical game improve, being able to problem-solve and make adjustments. It seemed like today there were a lot of different small puzzles you had to solve at times. Can you talk through tactically what you were trying to do today and what adjustments you had to make during the match?**

ANNA BLINKOVA: It's true that I've been working on adding different weapons to my game, working on variety of my shots.

First of all, I needed to do solid today because she's such an aggressive player. Every time when I played a bit shorter, she was stepping in and she was making me move, and I had to keep the variety, first of all, in my serve. I needed to have a good percentage of the first serve and change the zones all the time. And I tried to change the trajectory of the ball, which wasn't easy at all, because I was receiving very fast balls of big speeds. So it wasn't easy, but I tried.

I tried to use different zones. Most of the time I tried to play closer to the middle to not miss on the side and also



**ROLAND-GARROS**

to not give her too much angle.

**Q. On the return you were making adjustments as well. Sometimes you were way inside the baseline. Other times you looked like Medvedev at the back of the court. Can you talk a little bit about that because she -- it didn't seem that she was getting a lot of free points on her first serve, and you were kind of -- yeah, it seemed like you were bothering her rhythm a little bit.**

ANNA BLINKOVA: I tried to change the zones. I mean, I tried to change my placement on the return, especially on the second serve. She's a very big server, and her second serve is a high kick, so sometimes I tried to step in and take the ball early. Sometimes it was too tough, and I was stepping back to give myself some time to not miss the return, but to put the return in.

Also, it was very windy, so always taking the ball early was difficult. That's why sometimes I was stepping in to be aggressive, sometimes returning from the back to not disturb her a little bit, but also to not miss returns.

**Q. Caroline led one set, one break, and the match changed. Did you feel something? Did you feel an opening or something and, again, the change at this moment when you started to come back in the match?**

ANNA BLINKOVA: Not really, but as I said, I tried to play point-by-point, and I kept cheering myself up, you know. I tried to move, and I tried to tell myself to accelerate the ball, accelerate my hands, and follow through and be as aggressive as I can.

All these standard things that I kept repeating through the whole match: play safe zones, engage inside the ball, follow through, be brave on the serve. I tried to be brave all the time. I tried to hit hard, but near the middle, you know.

So there was no big change in my tactics. It was just I was patient, and I kept fighting, and at some point I could go forward in the score.

**Q. The next match you play against Svitolina. Is that just a match, or is there more because she's from Ukraine?**

ANNA BLINKOVA: Just a match for me. I will prepare



for this match tactically. I will analyze the match that we just played last week. I will think what I did good that time, what I did wrong, and I will go on the court to, first of all, enjoy the atmosphere of the tournament, and then just to give my best to win this match.

**Q. Anna, what does this win mean to you? It's your first top-5 win. Obviously you had confidence with what you did in Strasbourg last week, but third round of Roland Garros again. What does this mean to you?**

ANNA BLINKOVA: It means a lot. It means a lot for me. I cannot even describe how much it means.

First of all, playing on this court on Philippe-Chatrier, it's been my dream, and to play against a top-5 player is always something special.

You know, when I won my first round and then my coach told me that I'm going to play against Caroline Garcia on the Philippe-Chatrier, I couldn't think about anything else all of these days. I couldn't focus on nothing else. I couldn't do anything. I was just thinking and dreaming how I will play and how I will win.

So it's a very special day for me. I will probably never forget it. Also, because 7-5 in the third, having so many match points, and very tough end of the match, and I finally did it. It's an unbelievable feeling.

**Q. Can you talk about last year when -- I think you were one of the most unlikely tournament champions on the WTA Tour last year just with ranking and where you were at the time. Now, you know, less than 12 months you kind of have this day. Can you talk a little bit about that journey of what you feel like you have improved the most, if there's been any changes that you think has really helped trigger this rise, because it seems like you're playing the best tennis of your career.**

ANNA BLINKOVA: Yeah I think in October last year I won an award: The Most Surprising Champion of 2022 (smiling). Yeah, in the beginning of last year I was 160 in the world, and I had to play the 60,000 and 25,000, and every match was very tough on these tournaments.

I won so many matches in three sets, 7-5 in the third, fighting, and every day I was working with my team, with my coach where we were working on my tennis. They taught me that my goal, my main focus, must be on improving my tennis on a daily basis. And then on matches I just fight and I give my best, and that's it. There is nothing else.

Yeah, last year was -- I had a couple of ups and downs. And I think in summer I didn't play very well because I had some doubts about myself and all the pressure, and

I was focusing on ranking and winning matches, on the result of the matches, and it never helped me. But when I learned how to stay in the present moment and play point-by-point, and as I said, just give my best on matches and not thinking about winning or losing, then I really started to play better and win more matches when I let it go, the thoughts about the result and the ranking and stuff like that.

I had a couple of good results on big tournaments because I'm trying to have no expectations. It's not always easy to not think about winning or losing. It's very tough, but I'm working on this every day to let go the thoughts about the results and just, as I said, focusing on every day on practice, on work, on improving my tennis.

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