

Roland Garros

Thursday, 1 June 2023

Paris, France

Kayla Day

Press Conference

K. DAY/M. Keys

6-2, 4-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Kayla, can you give us your impressions about the match?

KAYLA DAY: It was a really tough match. It feels amazing to be in the third round. Madison is an incredible player.

To get my first top-20 win at Roland Garros, it's just amazing.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You've had a very good qualifying campaign. Are you comfortable at this level? You seem very comfortable on the clay court.

KAYLA DAY: I think I just kept fighting until the end, and I played really good defense at really important points. So I think that's what got me the win today.

Q. In general you've had a very good qualifying campaign here, and now this, and just in the buildup as well, you had a semifinal on clay. What do you feel in general you're doing better? Are you comfortable at this level at this point? You seem very comfortable on the court.

KAYLA DAY: Yeah, I think I worked so hard to improve my movement on clay, so I think I feel really comfortable on the clay now. I think that's helped make the biggest difference in my game to play at this level.

Yeah, I feel comfortable.

Q. Everyone knows the WTA circuit is really, really a tough go. You had some really nice results, 2017, but it's been a while. Could you just take this moment to reflect on the journey. How did you get through it? Were there some tough moments?

KAYLA DAY: I mean, yeah, I broke through pretty young at like 17, and then I had a lot of injuries, dealt with a lot of other issues. It just means so much to me to be back at this level. I have worked so hard to get back here. I



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have really grinded my way back.

So it just, I think it means so much to me, so much more to me now that I've had my struggles but overcame them. To be back here is just amazing.

Q. Could you just detail the tough moments a little bit. Could you just detail, bring to life, some of the tough moments. Must have been a really challenging process. Were there some moments that expressed that?

KAYLA DAY: Yeah, like I said, I had a ton of injuries, and I also had mono, which made me feel not so well for a very long time.

I tore my quad. I fractured my foot. I tore both labrums in my hip. So it was just a lot of bad luck, one thing after another.

Then by the time I was trying to like make a comeback or I was feeling a lot better, it was COVID. It was really difficult, because all my injuries were, like, I would be out for three, four months, and I never took a protected ranking, so it was so hard for me to come back.

Every time I tried coming back, it just felt like something else would happen. So then when I started feeling good, it was in 2020 during COVID, and they canceled all the tournaments and my ranking had dropped to like 600 at that point.

So it was really tough to even try to get into a tournament to try to play. I think in 2020 I played like three tournaments or something. So it's just, yeah, like I said, a lot of bad luck and bad timing.

Yeah, I found my way back (smiling).

Q. During those times, was there ever a part of you that thought, forget this, let me find something else to do? And whether there was or wasn't that sort of moment, how did you persevere and push forward and keep going?

KAYLA DAY: No, I don't feel like there was a moment that I really was, like, I don't want to do this. I love tennis, so I've always wanted to do this.

Sorry, what was the second part of that question?



Q. How did you get through and past all of those -- I mean, it sounds like running into a brick wall over and over and over again. How were you able to keep your head in it and move past that and get yourself to a day like today?

KAYLA DAY: I think, you know, just being tough myself but also the people around me really helped me get through those tough moments. Even in the moments that maybe I didn't believe in myself that I could be back at this level, they believed in me.

So I think that really helped.

Q. Back to something else you mentioned. I was just curious, when you answered the other question about footwork on clay, what were you doing wrong, what are you doing better? How did you learn to adjust that? What's different?

KAYLA DAY: Well, Pat Cash, who's here with me, he's just completely changed my idea on movement and the way I move. We did a lot of work before the clay season started together. So he's made probably the biggest difference in my movement, especially on my backhand side. Before I couldn't even really hit an open-stance backhand, so he helped me through that, basically, yeah.

Q. Have you learnt anything about yourself or the sport, just anything in general, over this past six years? How did you get with Pat Cash, how did that happen?

KAYLA DAY: Yeah, I've definitely learned that I'm a lot tougher than I thought I was, to just grind my way back like I have. That's something I'll carry with me through the rest of my career.

Because a lot of people, I think, counted me out or didn't believe in me anymore or whatever, and I just worked super hard and trusted myself. And, yeah, now I'm back here.

What was the second question?

Q. How did you get with Pat Cash?

KAYLA DAY: He was coaching another player. I don't want to mess up her name, but Qi Wang. They were training out in California a little bit in 2021 in the offseason and we hit together a few times. From there I kind of saw him around and we, you know, would be friendly with each other. Then this year in Australia he offered to help me a little bit before my other coach came.

Ever since then it's just been kind of, we've been working together, and it's been great.

Q. Going through qualifying, getting those wins and building some momentum, was there ever a thought that you weren't going to have to go through qualifying? There was a little bit of confusion with respect to that USTA wildcard with Emma getting direct-in and all that. Could you give some clarity.

KAYLA DAY: No, I thought I would always be in qualifying. I think people were a little bit confused because her ranking had jumped up, but on the qualifying -- I think on the main draw list she was pretty far down. So I never thought that I would be getting that wildcard, which it's fine. It's worked out okay (smiling).

Q. I've read you have a Czech background from your mother and that you can speak fluently Czech. Is it true? What is your relationship with this country today?

KAYLA DAY: Yes, it's true. What was the second...

THE MODERATOR: Relationship with this country.

KAYLA DAY: Oh, I'm actually a citizen of the Czech Republic. I have a Czech passport, which is very helpful when I come to Europe.

And yes, my mom, she was born and raised in Prague, and I speak fluent Czech. That's the only reason why I'm good at tennis, because I'm half Czech. (Laughter.)

Q. There have been a couple of good Czech lefties. Do you try to play like any lefty I can think of?

KAYLA DAY: I wish (smiling).

Q. I mean, who do you emulate?

KAYLA DAY: I mean, growing up I loved Nadal. That was like who I looked up to, and obviously Martina Navratilova, Czech lefty.

Q. (Off mic.)

KAYLA DAY: Yeah, but one time I remember a really long time ago I told my coach at that time, Oh, I like Kvitova. I think he asked the question, like, Who are you most similar to? I said Kvitova. He said, What are you talking about? You play nothing the same. Get that out of your mind (smiling).

Yeah, I wish, she's obviously a Grand Slam champion, incredible player, but yeah, I'm not super similar to Kvitova in the way we play.

Q. I was part of a clinic that you were in when you were a little kid. It was a USTA thing. I wonder how much USTA has been a part of your growth.

KAYLA DAY: Oh, yeah. I started going to the USTA when I was 11 years old down in Carson till the time I was, like, 18. So they helped me a ton when I was a junior, and, you know, I couldn't have done it without them.

Every single day I'd go to practice, and there were, like, 10 other girls my age, and we would just be constantly pushing each other to get better. It was just great, yeah.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

KAYLA DAY: Claire Liu. She's about to play. We grew up playing together. We've known each other since we were like seven years old, yeah.

Q. That's sort of along the lines I was going to ask. I'm California-based. Two things. Indian Wells is so huge an event and you had such a breakthrough as such a young person then. What was that experience like? Also, what was the scene early in Santa Barbara? Is your father still with us? Does he still have the swagger you mentioned?

KAYLA DAY: Yes (smiling). So Indian Wells, that was an incredible run when I was 17. I grew up watching that tournament from when I was super young. My mom would take me down there and we'd watch.

So to be able to play on that center court was just like a dream come true to me. It was like a full-circle moment to grow up watching that tournament and play there.

It's still one of my favorite tournaments, and I really, really hope I can be there next year because I've missed it for quite a few years.

My dad is still around, and he's got just as much swagger (smiling).

What was the last...

Q. As a young child in Santa Barbara.

KAYLA DAY: Growing up in Santa Barbara, I traveled a lot, and Santa Barbara is my favorite place in the world. You can't really beat it. I have so many supporters from there, and I just feel like, you know, I definitely feel the Santa Barbara love, even in Paris.

Q. Santa Barbara or Goleta...

KAYLA DAY: Santa Barbara.

Q. You mentioned earlier that there are people who may have doubted you and didn't think you would get to this point again. What was that like? Did you kind of see it in real time while you were going through your injuries and comebacks? What did that

feel like for you?

KAYLA DAY: Yeah, I think the biggest thing that I learned was just to stop focusing on what you think other people are saying about you and focus on yourself.

People say this all the time, but your journey, you can't compare your journey to anyone else. So I think that's what's helped me.

Q. Since we last saw you at Indian Wells, have you acquired any new dogs and are they named after tennis players?

KAYLA DAY: We have acquired more dogs...

Q. Same names, new names?

KAYLA DAY: None of them are tennis players. But yes, we have currently four dogs. Two mini golden doodles, but they're not mini. One is 65 pounds. Not tennis players.

The two tennis player dogs are still around, but they're getting up there, yeah (smiling).

Q. Those were Garbine and Rafa, if I'm remembering?

KAYLA DAY: Yeah, we only name them after Spanish tennis players.

Q. That's also why you're good at tennis.

KAYLA DAY: Yeah.

Q. Growing up in Santa Barbara how come you grew up liking Spanish tennis players? Is there something about the Spanish way of playing, just those two characters, or just in general?

KAYLA DAY: So Rafa I named when I was like nine years old, and just because I was a lefty, and obviously he's one of the best players to ever play the game.

No, my mom is responsible for the other one. So that one wasn't me.

Q. What are your other dogs' names?

KAYLA DAY: The other ones' names are Jasper and Calvin.

Q. Of the four dogs, who has the highest ranking?

KAYLA DAY: Right now? I have no -- well, I don't know. (Laughter.)

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