

Roland Garros

Friday, 2 June 2023

Paris, France

Elise Mertens

Press Conference

E. MERTENS/J. Pegula

6-1, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Seventh win of your career over a top-5 player. First one since 2021 and your first time you are into the fourth round of the Roland Garros. How do you feel right now?

ELISE MERTENS: I feel very happy. It was a good day at the office.

I mean, I played an incredible first set. Of course, I knew that she was going to come back. She's a great competitor, a great player and fighter.

So I think the game from 4-3 to 5-3 was crucial to get that one and to get the win. So, yeah, I mean, the confidence was there today. So happy about my level.

THE MODERATOR: We will continue with questions in French.

Q. Elise, you've been through a lot in your career, and you've had a tough year. How happy are you compared to everything you've been through?

ELISE MERTENS: Well, I think I played at a very good level today, and that's the level that I can play at, so I'm really satisfied.

I think the first set was really nice, and the second one was not too bad either. I'm in the fourth round now, and I'm really happy. I'm going to hope that I get the same or even a better result than last year.

Q. Well, for your first two rounds it was quite complicated, but in this match we felt that you were flying on the court.

ELISE MERTENS: I think the third round is always tough because you very often meet a seeded player, and that was the World No. 3, so that was going to be a tough one. I think I was mentally prepared to fight.

And on Philippe-Chatrier, it's very special. A lot of Belgians, a lot of fans out there, so I really had a great time.



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Q. So now your next opponent is Pavlyuchenkova. She's a very experienced player. She was a finalist here. So what's your take on that one?

ELISE MERTENS: It's going to be a tough one, of course, but I'm going to focus on myself, and I'm going to review and watch today's match again and focus on myself, as I said. I hope I'll have the best possible chances.

Q. Who do you think is the favorite?

ELISE MERTENS: Well, I don't really know. Maybe the fans will tell you, but I don't know.

Q. This French Open 2023 was really complicated for French players. Nobody in the third round. You speak French, so do you think the crowd is going to support you a little bit more in this second week?

ELISE MERTENS: Well, I hope so. You know, Belgium is close, and I hope so. I came here driving, so it's really close.

Q. Were you surprised by the French players' level? Do you think it's a failure?

ELISE MERTENS: Well, you know, it's tough to say. There are very good French players. They're in the top 100, top 30.

They are used to being at the top 10, but tennis is sometimes difficult to find your rhythm. In terms of results as well, you know, there are lots of ups and downs, and we are on clay, and there are other surfaces. So anything is possible in tennis.

Q. Concerning your relationship with the crowd, do you think that if you get the support from the French crowd, it could help you a little bit more because we know that the crowd support always helps?

ELISE MERTENS: Of course, it does bring a lot of support. I'm almost at home here, and I try to speak French because I'm in France here. It gives a lot of energy.

Q. You've been asked so many times that question I bet, but this legacy from Justine and also from Kim because they've won several times, how do you



manage that?

ELISE MERTENS: Well, that's incredible. Justine won four times. I'm just trying to take it one step at a time, one match at a time. I'm going to be in the fourth round, but I want more, that's for sure.

Just like Justine and Kim, that was a step higher than me. They've won many more Grand Slams and Master titles.

I'm happy; I'm proud to be a Belgian. I'm proud of my results even though I didn't get the same results, but I think I played a great match.

Q. (Off microphone.)

ELISE MERTENS: There are other players, so it's not like that. I'm proud to be Belgian, and these two are different people, but Kim was here today. I'm really happy that I'm in the fourth round, and she's watched the matches.

Q. So there's a quarterfinals to go and get, and you've already made it to the quarterfinals at the Australian Open. What does that mean for you to tick that box here at the French Open?

ELISE MERTENS: Well, I've never played the quarterfinals here at the French Open, but even if you're going to win in straight sets or not, even though I won the first 6-1, so I'm going to focus on the victory and the fact that I can get through to the quarterfinals.

I'm just going to focus on my level, and we'll see how it goes.

Q. I think that you probably wanted to do as well as last year in terms of points for the ranking, but are you now considering the rankings? Maybe you're going to go back to the top 20 because it was tough for you to get out of the top 20?

ELISE MERTENS: Well, if you win these matches after the fourth round, of course, but I needed to defend that fourth round, and I've made it. I'm proud that I've won three matches. It's not an easy thing to do, but if I win a few more matches, I can improve my ranking.

I'm just going to take it one match at a time, but if I win more matches, of course, I'm going to improve my ranking.

Q. Do you know what the feedback is from the Belgian fans, the fact that you're going through to the fourth round and just thinking that there's still a Belgian player here at the French Open?

ELISE MERTENS: Well, I hope so. I've played the

doubles right after my singles match, so I didn't check my phone. I saw that I received a lot of messages.

Just like in the previous years with Kim and Justine, I think we're here playing, but I love Belgium.

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