

Roland Garros

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Lesia Tsurenko

Press Conference

L. TSURENKO/B. Andreescu

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THE MODERATOR: Lesia, congratulations.

LESIA TSURENKO: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: It was a great win for you today, so tell us how you feel right now getting to the fourth round again at Roland Garros.

LESIA TSURENKO: Yeah, I feel very happy. The match I think was good quality, high quality from me, which is always nice to feel that you played really well.

But I think I was really prepared for that match. I was focused, and I was just happy that everything went by the plan.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. A year ago I spoke to you in qualifying, and obviously a different time, but you spoke about how the war back home had completely shifted your perspective and almost freed you up to play more freely, I guess. Is that still the case 12 months on? Do you still feel that it's helping your tennis at all taking that pressure away, shifting your perspective?

LESIA TSURENKO: I definitely don't want to think about this as something that is helping me. Actually, it's opposite.

I said many times that it was actually a big decision for me to stay in tennis. I think what really helped me is that I increased my work with a psychologist. I increased a lot because I had panic attacks, and I had really tough time.

So for me it was a learning process how to continue playing in these conditions and how to try to go on court and with some bigger goals.

You know, not just play tennis, but I will be honest. I want to earn as more as I can to donate as more as I can. This is actually a bigger thing that I have in my mind when I decided that I will continue playing and I will be on



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tour.

Q. Having that because tennis players for so long -- well, most of you from the very beginning play for yourselves, and it's so internal, and you are the whole driving force. To be playing for something bigger, how different of a motivation have you found that?

LESIA TSURENKO: Yeah, as I've said, I never played for money. Never in my life I was thinking about money going on court and thinking about how big prize money I get if I win.

But, as I said, a year ago it was a point where I was thinking, okay, or I go back home and I will be a volunteer and do whatever is necessary for my country.

But, actually, I have to say that I had a conversation with Alex Dolgopolov which really helped me who told me, look, we will do our job here, and you continue your job, and you continue what you can do the best.

He told me that, You know, we need money.

I said, Okay.

So I continue playing. I want to improve myself. I want to improve my game, and I will donate. This is what I'm doing a lot, and I feel better when I do that because I still feel quite guilty that I'm not in Ukraine. I'm doing something really -- you know, sport is definitely something great to do.

So, yes, it's just a bigger thing in my head. And often when I have tough moments in my match, I also remind myself that I'm from Ukraine, that I'm Ukrainian, and I'm a part of the strongest nation, and I have to be proud, and I am proud that I'm Ukrainian.

Q. On that note, obviously two Ukrainians in the round of 16 with Elina as well. That has to be a point of great pride for both of you and for your country back home. How much inspiration are you kind of getting off of each other? I mean, Elina has had to really battle out there in those three-set wins, but are you taking something from that?

LESIA TSURENKO: For sure. Her case, her return, is inspirational. And I was really unhappy when I saw the draw in Rome. I was, like, I don't want to play against



Elina because I'm wishing her the best, and I go on court to beat her.

It wasn't the greatest moment. Of course, in general for Ukrainian tennis it was great to see two Ukrainians on the center stadium, but you know we go there to win, so it wasn't easy.

But at the same time Elina is such an inspiration. In general, the way she was playing before pregnancy, it was, like, unbelievable. Some matches, her defense. She did so many great results.

And the main thing is that she's a great fighter, so it was always for me, like, oh, I watch her matches to take a little bit of that energy and to learn something.

And now she's showing again that her return is so quick. I don't know. She's flying in the ranking.

And, of course, we keep in touch. We support each other. Definitely it's great to have someone like her, a great champion in tennis, in Ukrainian tennis history.

Q. Just from a tennis perspective, what has been the key for you through this first week? What do you think you're doing particularly well to get these wins?

LESIA TSURENKO: I feel that I kind of know how to play on clay court. I'm trying to use all kind of tricks. You know, clay court is very different from hard court, so I'm trying to play a lot of that heavy spin balls.

I feel that physically I'm really good, that I'm very quick. At the same time I'm very endurant, so I can play long points and then I can do winners, and I can go for some volleys.

Yeah, just probably my physical condition is really good now, which is helping for sure.

Q. Given everything that you told us earlier, are you allowing yourself to be happy about the fact that you are in the fourth round, at 34 years old back in the fourth round here five years later? Are you allowing yourself to at least congratulate yourself or be happy about what you have done?

LESIA TSURENKO: Yeah, definitely, because there is another part of the story. When I had a long, long story with my right elbow, I've said it many times, it was a terrible time of my life having pain every day.

I was not able to play tennis a lot. I was not able to practice. I pulled out from tournaments, retired so many times, and it was very painful mentally. So this is another part of my life.

I don't have so much pain right now, so I can practice more, I can play more. Of course, it makes me very happy that I'm playing, and I did not expect that. I'll be honest, at the beginning of this year I did not expect.

Of course, I'm winning a lot of matches, which is a great feeling for sure. I tried to stay focused. And, believe me, I always remember about my country and about my people, Ukrainian people.

Q. Obviously you play Iga next. How do you see that challenge coming up here? Probably maybe Chatrier or Lenglen. How would you describe how she's playing on this surface right now?

LESIA TSURENKO: Probably one of the biggest challenges on tour right now. She is No. 1 in the world.

I just had a match against her in Rome, which I think it was good just to feel how she's playing and to feel the speed of her shots.

It was definitely a good experience for me. It was a good lesson for me, so I will try to play better this time.

I really think that match in Rome helped me. It helped me a lot.

Q. Lesia, just on the elbow, is there anything that you did to make it more pain-free this year, or is it just time, rehabilitation? I don't know.

LESIA TSURENKO: Oh, I tried everything in this world because the inflammation went to the bone, and to treat the bone is really a problem. You can probably ask any physician in this world. They would tell you that it is just time, you know.

My wish was continue playing, and I was dreaming. You know, it was more like a dream that I continue playing and my elbow would heal by miracle probably.

So I made a good break at the end of the last year. We worked a lot on balancing the whole body, and it worked. I still have pain, but it's so much less pain, and some days are pain-free, but not too many.

My elbow is recovering, which is good. I can have a little bit more pain in the evening, but when I wake up, it goes down, which is great. I can play, and I can practice.

Tennis is the love of my life, so I'm really enjoying being here.

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