

# Roland Garros

Sunday, 4 June 2023

Paris, France

## Elina Svitolina

### Press Conference

E. SVITOLINA/D. Kasatkina

6-4, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Elina, congratulations. Into the quarterfinals here. Did you ever expect that coming into this tournament after such a long break?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, I was just taking match by match, and for me was important to get the first win, to get the second win. You know, each time I step on the court, I try to have the best preparation possible, the best mindset possible.

Yeah, just taking it one match at a time.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. You're married to a Frenchman, father of your child, and for some public here you're like the last French player here.**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Last French player standing (smiling).

**Q. How is your relationship with France, with Paris, and could you answer this question in French?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Definitely not (smiling). I wish.

But yeah, from the first round, you know, people were cheering me on and getting more and more, and really, really special, the things that I didn't expect that.

I already knew from Strasbourg that a lot of people supported me. We have been married for a couple of years now. I have been with Gael for over five years now. I didn't expect that it would come like this year.

Yeah, but in the end, just thankful for the crowd to be there for me, even though it was some matches I was one set down and coming back to win, they are cheering me on and giving me this push and this hope that I can come back and can win.

**Q. You were in the top 5, top 10 for so long. Obviously coming to these tournaments, there was a lot of expectation on you to get to quarterfinals,**



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**semifinals. I just wonder, is it quite nice coming to a tournament without that number next to your name and being able to maybe surprise yourself and surprise other people?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, definitely. I think this is one of the things that I noticed that right now I don't have that pressure that I used to have before.

Of course me personally I put kind of pressure for myself because I want to win a slam. This is the ultimate goal for me.

But definitely not the pressure from outside. No one, you know, expects that, you know, I'm going to come into Roland Garros and make quarterfinal at the beginning of the tournament. Like I don't think many people would say, Yeah, you know, she's gonna do it.

That's why I feel like this really helps me. I feel almost like I'm 17 again coming on the tour fresh. I'm not defending any points. Not here, not next week.

Yeah, it's definitely I feel like more free.

**Q. Congratulations on the amazing and inspirational run that you are having here right now. After your win in the last round you said that some of my questions were out of this world. So I would like to ask you if an alien came down from space and you were the first person that they met, what would you say to them about the world that we're living in right now, about how amazing it can be and about how cruel it can be?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, I will definitely ask how it is out there, in space. You know, it's more interesting than explaining how boring it is in this world right now (smiling).

**Q. On a serious note, if it is Sabalenka in the quarterfinals, you'll be aware of the political sensitivities around that. How do you think you feel if it is her in the last eight and how do you think your match will be viewed in Ukraine?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, I have played last two matches against Russian players so it will not change, everything will be same. So I'm used to it now, it's gonna be the same.



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**Q. Congratulations on the results. I just wanted to ask about the naming of your daughter, the spelling has a very unique Ukrainian letter. Wonder if there was added significance to naming her in that fashion?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, the funny thing it is special letter in Ukraine and actually French way, as well, in France, as well. You use this, like I don't know how it's called in English, but the trema.

Yeah, it's actually the coincidence that happened like that. We wanted to call her Skai at the beginning, and then when we were talking about the spelling, we thought this could be a special one for her. Yeah. It came like that.

**Q. To which you said earlier about feeling 17 again, other than the pandemic, this is the longest break you have ever taken probably since you were very young. You had a full junior and senior career. Looking back, were there moments where you felt there were moments of burnout that maybe you didn't recognize? How much fresher are you feeling now that you have had this time off?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, definitely. Being a tennis player brings lots of different things with. You have like this baggage behind you always with the pressure from the media, pressure from, you know, your home, from people, as well. From fans, you know, from social media, as well. It is lots and lots of things happening.

Obviously you put also a lot of pressure on yourself, and sometimes you can be like too much. Sometimes playing every single week, being under this like in a fishbowl all the time is very tiring. You have to always be perfect almost, you know.

It's impossible, because we are all humans. We're all people who have our good days, our bad days. So for sure it's, for everyone it's very tough.

For me it was great period of time to be away from tennis, to be completely switched off from it. I really could enjoy my time with my family. Not talking about the next tournament, the next goal, the next, you know, player that I'm gonna play. Just, you know, be normal.

My mind rested. My body rested in the way that it could with the pregnancy. But, you know, this period really helped me to refresh. Then when I start training in January, I was extremely motivated. Like never before almost. I put a lot of good work, a lot of good months into it.

So, you know, in this time I'm starting with experience that I have and with the freshness. So that's why, I guess that's why I came back to the tour quite quick.

Yeah, this probably would be the answer why it's like happening really quick for me.

**Q. You mentioned the support you had from the French crowd. Do you feel how much support you're getting from around the world from what you're doing here and from at home, and rather than being a pressure, is that helping you?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, definitely I had a great welcome in Charleston for the first tournament, as well, and then played in some other tournaments. Also great support, lots of -- much more Ukrainians as well are coming to watch as well.

Yeah, I feel really, really thankful for that, and it gives me a motivation to work hard, to be there all the time at my best. Definitely support is a huge motivator and huge thing that keeps you motivated.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about how you're recovering, the last three matches have been tough and tense battles. How does your body feel? Is there anything you do different now in your recovery and rest that you didn't do when you were younger?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, I definitely take very serious the recovery. Not that I was not taking it before. But right now I try to really listen to my body, take time. You know, I'm not rushing, you know, to the dinner because I want to really recover properly.

Because I know that right now I have to watch out. You know, you never know how your body is going to react after I didn't play tennis for eight months so completely. So I have to watch out and be really careful with the load that I have now, from 0 to 1000% that my body is working. Also a lot of stress, like a lot of moments, like stressful moments during the match.

So I have to really be careful with recovery.

**Q. Do you think you can win this tournament?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, as I said at the beginning, for me right now, important to recover, then practice tomorrow, do the planning for next match, be focused to the next match, and then play well in the match.

Of course I would love to win here. It will be the dream, but it's always been in my career like step by step. I think this is the only right way to do, to not look too much into the future, because otherwise you lose your focus from the small things that brings you to win the matches.

**Q. Could you just clarify, did you acknowledge Daria at the end of the match? Obviously a lot going on in your head at the time. Just wondering, because of**

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**things that she said and perhaps the sort of personality that she is, did it maybe cross your mind to do a little bit more at the end of the match with her than perhaps some other opponents?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, definitely I acknowledged the match today. Really thankful for her position that she took. Yeah, she's really brave person to say it publicly, that not so many players did.

She's a brave one.

**Q. You mentioned pressure from media in the previous question. I hope that you can see this kind of a press conference as a good opportunity to express your opinion, your personal idea of things. Can you talk a little bit about your thoughts on having this kind of press conference and having your voice on this press, these kind of press conference.**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, I think it's good to have press conference, because players are sharing their thoughts. Players are sharing some moments that they have on the court, off the court. So for people to see how they feel, what they experiencing, because everyone, for sure, would want to speak with tennis player to ask them how they felt out there on the court, what they have been going through, you know, just their thoughts.

So I think, you know, to have press conference is a great thing. It's also like giving back to the fans, giving back to the people who loves the sport.

**Q. When you decided to come back after pregnancy, did you have some models, examples among other sportswomen? Maybe you have contact, to have advices, for example, I don't know if you know Clarisse Agbegenou, the French judo player? Do you have any other sportswomen who inspired you for coming back after pregnancy?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, I didn't have the contact with anyone, but I know, you know, few athletes. Like obviously in tennis, you know, like Tatjana Maria, she made final in Wimbledon. It's a huge motivation for me maybe to do better, even better than she did this amazing run.

So there is many athletes who did that. Clijsters, she won a Grand Slam after the baby. So I have this motivation to do it, and I know that this is possible by the example of others.

Yeah, hopefully, you know, I'm going to get this chance. I'm working really hard towards this goal. But trying to be focused as well with match by match, taking it one at a time.

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