

Roland Garros

Friday, 9 June 2023

Paris, France

Leylah Fernandez

Taylor Townsend

Press Conference

FERNANDEZ-TOWNSEND/Gauff-Pegula

6-0, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, you two. Into your first slam final as a duo. Can you just talk about the match today and how you're able to get it done today in two quick sets?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Taylor?

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: I'm just honestly so proud of how we were able to play and perform. I told Leylah after the match, This is what we have been building towards over the past couple of months. You know, from where we started as a team and just figuring each other out to now, like, understanding each other so well and being able to play such great, consistent tennis against No. 1 seeds.

Especially I'm really proud of how we were able to kind of put our last result behind us. We lost to Jess and Coco in the finals in Miami, and we were able to kind of, like, learn from it, detach from the result, and then just understand and take what we learned in that match and apply it into this one.

I'm so proud of like how we were able to stay focused and committed to what we were doing on our side of the net and not worry about what they were doing.

Yeah, I mean, I'm so proud, but, you know, work is not done. We've still got one more. You know, this match, I'm sure for Leylah, as well, this match has made me even more hungry to hold the winning trophy.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Taylor, on a scale of 1 to 10 on your pop scale, where were you at today? Do you know what your fastest serve ever is, was?

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: It was today, right?

Q. I don't know. What was it before?



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TAYLOR TOWNSEND: No, I don't know what it was before. I know I hit 201, so it was like 124.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Muscles.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: I have been doing push-ups. (Laughter.)

Yeah, so that was really cool, because I told my coach at the beginning of the season, I was, like, Hey, I want to hit 130 by the end of the season. So I'm getting close. So I'm pumped now. So watch out for bombs. (Laughter.)

Yeah, what was the first part?

Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, personal scale, how pumped was today?

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Oh, man. Honestly, I would probably say about like a solid, you know, 7, 8. Because if you go in too high, then it's very difficult to regulate, and they are such a good team. They are so solid. Just their baseline is so high, like, their standard play is very high.

So if you come in, then, you know, it's really hard, and especially how we played in the first set, whenever you win a 6-0 set, because things can start sliding very quickly, so we really tried to maintain and manage that emotionally.

You know, I'm incredibly pumped for the way that we played, you know, just how we were able to work together as a team and really control what was going on on our side.

But, you know, I'll be at a 12. You know, we're holding the winning trophy, I'll be at a 12. You'll know. Trust me, you'll know what a 20 looks like, trust me. (Laughter.)

Q. Leylah, looked like the two of you out there have a lot of fun together. Obviously carries off court. A lot of laughter. How important is that, and did you feel that really helped you out there on the court today?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think that's the most important thing out there, to have good chemistry off court. Taylor and I have known each other for a couple of months. I don't think we talked before, partnering before Indian Wells. We did not talk.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Ever. I didn't even say hi. I was, like, I don't know this girl. This is going to be fun. (Laughter.)

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Exactly. (Laughter.)

But then our relationship started to grow more and more off court. We're like very comfortable with each other. Like we are talking, joking around, and we're not afraid to tell each other the truth, which that's the most important thing, which, like, when she sees I'm playing like really bad, she's not afraid to say, You're playing like shit. (Laughter.)

And then like same thing for me and our team. We're always honest with each other. So then on court we are able to like trust each other, trust in our game, and that we're going to pump each other up.

I think that's the No. 1 thing, to have good chemistry for a team off court so that can help on court.

Q. You may have explained this in previous press conferences, but can explain to me what the postmatch celebration was, the sprinkling? Is it a secret?

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: No, it's not a secret. Just inside joke that I have with my team, like, because we found like some of the food sometimes doesn't have any seasoning on it. I'm, like, sprinkling a little salt, seasoning, just season the crowd, season the ball, the court, everything.

So it's just, you know, adding a little flavor, you know. That's my thing.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Add a little bit of spice.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Sugar, spice, everything nice. We're Bubblegum Babies, no Powerpuff Girls, whatever. However you want to spin it. But, yeah, I'm just adding a little sprinkling, a little sauce, you know, on what we got going on on court.

We definitely -- I need that clip, please. (Laughter.)

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: That will be on the feed like right away.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Yeah, cut.

Q. You obviously learned a lot in Miami. A 6-0 first set, what did you say to each other after that? You were playing a good team. 6-Love looks strange.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: We did not think about the score.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: No. I just said, All right, the set is over. I just really tried to close the book, like, and I said to Leylah, I was, like, We played great, that was awesome, but let's move on.

Like don't drag this into the next set, because they're a great team. They're going to adjust. They're going to do things better, do things differently. We can't expect for the next set to go the same way.

So, you know, emotionally just tried to kind of end it there and be present on what we were trying to do and our game plan in the next set.

Honestly, like, I don't think either of us really thought about the score. I think that we were just really focused on what we were doing on our side of the court.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah, which is true.

Q. Congrats. I have noticed over the years, Taylor, you have this wonderful quality of an opinion or two on different things. My question is the game of tennis has a lot of rules, traditions, customs. If you were in charge, what would be the one thing, maybe two, that you would change in the sport of tennis?

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Oh, getting deep.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Jeez. This is for you.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Wow. One thing I would change in the sport of tennis...

I think from my experience over the years and even in this tournament, I personally would like to see there be an increase in the level of care in qualifying than main draw. I feel like there is a significant drop and there is a lack of care during quallies week.

I think that there is a mentality that it's different. And it's not different. We're all here. It's still a Grand Slam. We have worked super hard to get here and are working overtime to make our way into main draw. I have been in this situation many times where there's certain things that you don't get in quallies that you get in main draw.

In quallies here, Oh, just walk out to the court. But main draw, Meet us here and we're going to escort you to the court.

Why is it different?

Oh, you get same-side coaching. Your coach can talk to you in quallies but not in main draw. Why? Why is it different? In quallies you don't get a car. You take the bus. But in main draw you get a car. Why?

So for me I think that the level of care and awareness



towards everybody who is in the draw and treating everybody the same, that we are all professional athletes working our asses off to be here, because we earned it. Whether it's main draw or qualifying, I don't think that it matters. I think that it should be a certain standard when we get to these events, all events, really. It shouldn't change.

You know, just creating a more stringent standard for the tournament as a whole and not treating things and the people who are in places, doubles versus singles, doubles versus mixed, like, it shouldn't be, we are all players, all here, we've all earned our way.

I think if I was in charge, like that's what it would be. Everything would be consistent and everything would be the same, because I wanted players to feel like they are valued no matter where you are in the draw, no matter where you are in the tournament. First round or last, you're still cared about, and your needs, and you're heard.

Q. Watching both of you throughout your careers, Taylor seems like a more extroverted competitor. Leylah, you seem a little bit more of an introverted competitor. Leylah, your experience playing doubles with Taylor, how much does it rub off on you, that style of competition? How much does it -- sometimes it could be maybe too much sometimes, how you balance it. But just if you could talk about what that experience is like for you and the way that you compete specifically, partnering with Taylor.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think it's perfect for me, because I see the confidence that Taylor has, and that helps me in tight moments. Like today, for example, like my service game was very tight on I think all of them.

Taylor had so much confidence, saying, No, like, you got this. Focus on the next point, next serve.

That has helped me to put my mistakes aside and just think of the moment and not really dwell on it. I think that's what I need to learn as a player for my singles match, to just keep going, keep having that confidence in myself, my style of game, and not think about my past mistakes.

And Taylor being so loud and so extroverted, I think it has rubbed off on me on being more, like, not open-minded but speaking out a little bit more, speaking out my thoughts, like seeing, like, Oh, I see this. Like I said, I'm not afraid to tell Taylor the truth, and I think that has helped me more as a person outside the court too.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

Q. When we spoke after your defeat, you were in tears. It was a difficult evening, and you said that the

reason was that you hated losing. So is the solution to stop losing?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: It's difficult not to lose, because we can't control the result. I can't control whether I win or lose. What I can control is what I feel during my training sessions, and this is what we did well after my singles match. I spoke with my coaches. My father came along with my sister, and I'm very happy about this.

It didn't give me a boost, but it made me happy to see them because I hadn't seen them for a while. It was great to have them with me and to start the day with the mindset where I thought, okay, I'm going to work hard. I'm going to improve on my errors. I won't have such a loss again.

I can have the right mindset, improve on my game, and not to be sad for a few days in a row after such a defeat.

Q. What would it feel like if you win, no matter which format?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: May it be in singles, doubles, mixed doubles, any player here playing in this tournament would dream to play a Grand Slam and win and to hoist the trophy and have the trophy at home, to have the opportunity to play on Sunday on Chatrier, yes, on Chatrier, to have this opportunity.

It's exciting, and I'm looking forward to playing and to share the court with Taylor.

Q. Do you think you can win?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yes, I think we're a very good team, so I think we can win. Every tournament we improve ourselves, and the results show it. We make less errors. We communicate well.

So I think we have a good chance to win. But it will be a tough match. Our opponents managed to reach the finals because they were good players. They won all the difficult matches before, and I think we have to think one point at a time.

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