

National Bank Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Leylah Fernandez

Press Conference



L. FERNANDEZ/S. Sanders

6-4, 6-7, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: A pretty impressive match out there. Try and talk us through it as best you can.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yes, it was definitely one tough match. It had everything. It had great moments, bad moments, it had spectacular moments from both players.

And I was just super happy that I was able to play in front of my home crowd. And also that at the end of the match my body feels amazing. So that's a huge positive. That's the biggest win that I can ask for.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please?

Q. I wonder what you felt like with that first match point, how you kind of shook that off and were able to keep going.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Honestly, I have no idea. Like I was pretty disappointed with myself that I couldn't convert my first match point or my second match point. I don't know exactly how many I had in that set, in that second set, but I knew I had a couple. And Storm did an excellent job in staying in the match and also fighting.

I think when the third set started I was lucky enough that I was able to look at my box and my corner and I just saw my dad saying like, Just keep fighting, keep working through it. Like it's not going to be an easiest match. We knew that from the get-go.

That just reminded me of all the times that we had some difficulties in the training sessions and I just went back to it and I just started working even harder.

Q. Any considering you haven't played in over two months, how content or satisfied are you with the way that you performed out there tonight and how does it feel to get your first ever National Bank Open victory?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think I'm extremely happy that I got my first win in National Bank Open in three years. Three years played against a qualifier, three years I lose against a qualifier.

So I was happy that today I was able to get the win. And I think after not playing for two months I had a lot of expectations for myself to play an amazing match. That everything's going to fall in and like my serve, my return, my forehand's going to work like I want it to. But it did not.

I think I was just happy the way that I was stronger mentally to accept it in certain moments and then get back to work.

So it's obviously not my best level but I was just happy that I was able to fight through all these emotions that I had for myself.

Q. You looked amazing out there, how did you, how did your conditioning feel going through like each and every set and all those moments where you're having to fight through deuces and trying to win those ones?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah, it was not easy. I haven't played a tennis match in a long time. But I've been training extremely well, long hours trying to prepare for these matches.

I was feeling well, but we all know that a tennis match is different. Because you have these emotions, you have the expectations.

But I think I was just happy that we were training good and that we were able to prepare not only myself physically but mainly mentally. Because mentally is the one that's going to push me through those tough moments. It's going to make me stronger. It's going to make me like make that decision to get through it and not get down on myself.

Q. Wondering if you could take us through your emotions at the start of the match. You got that huge ovation entering the court and your introduction and then it was a long first game. So if you could just take us through what that was like.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah, when I first stepped on the



court I got goose bumps. I was so happy and excited to be playing in front of the home crowd, in front of my family.

I think that also made me very nervous. In the first game I started making some mistakes. Storm also came in hitting some winners.

So I think it just took a little bit for me to get used to that speed and tempo of a match and not of a training. So I think I did a good job in staying composed and just not letting that first game slip, because that could have made the whole match different.

Q. Just wondered, what did the crowd do for you over the course of that match do you think? And then apologies for this question, but do you prefer to go by Leylah or Leylah Annie?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Well I do like Leylah Annie because you can kind of make it in whole different ways.

You can put it together, Lelani, which is actually beautiful wine flower. Leylah is Arabic, also like a certain, like a beautiful dark night. And Layla is also a very great song from Bryan Adams if I'm not mistaken (laughing). And Annie is also my dad's sister.

So it's like we love to play around with both names. So that's why I say like Leylah Annie is what I prefer.

But the crowd did wonders for me. I was feeling their emotions. I was feeling their cheers. The energy that they were able to give me from the very first point all the way to the last, it was phenomenal.

I was just super happy to feel that emotion again, feel that electricity going through my body once again. And just to leave the court with a win and knowing that the fans, the crowd helped me makes it even better.

Q. You've had these incredibly boisterous crowds not just, I mean obviously you had it tonight, but in New York, in Mexico, in Paris as well, when you're engaged in these long, drawn out fights. I'm curious, how did this compare to that? What makes it different to get that sort of ovation, that sort of support here compared to like in New York, Mexico, Paris, wherever.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: It's hard to say because all these like crowds in different countries, like they have that certain energy.

Like in New York we know it's a city that never sleeps. So we expect it to be loud. Especially at midnight, 1 a.m., 2 a.m. in the morning. So like you expect that.

And then in Mexico like I just felt so comfortable going there and playing in front of the Mexicans. I feel like they have also accepted me as like one of them. So that was like just one of like the best part.

Like even though I would like, like I lost the first year I went to Mexico, but they were still cheering for me. They still gave me like that, the love that like made me want to play tennis again.

And then here in Toronto it's just like playing in front of my family, playing in front of the Canadian crowd, playing in front of all the people who have helped me, who have cheered me on throughout the years. So it's like a great way for me to say thank you to them by showing that all the years that not only I suffer, but they suffer too has paid off and hopefully that this can keep going.

Q. A bit surprised to see you entered in the doubles draw as well as the singles draw here in Toronto, given having a two-and-a-half-month layoff with the foot injury. Can you talk about the thought process to enter both draws. And after a longer match tonight is your plan still to play with your sister tomorrow?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yes. (Laughing). Yes, definitely. The thought process of playing doubles with Bianca was mainly because I needed to play matches. We need to get back to that competition mode as quickly as possible.

So of course I'm happy that I can play singles, but doubles helped me in a lot of things. It helps me in the return of serves, volleys, returns.

And also gets me into that offensive mindset of, if I do like give an easy ball, there's not only just one player, there's two players on the other side who is going to come at us. So it's just going to help us get ready for those tougher matches.

Of course it's going to be like extra hours on the legs, but that's what we want. That's what we want to see if my body can take it. And up to now it's going great so I'm just happy that I have a great team behind me and who is going to see and can help me make decisions. If they're tough ones, they're tough ones. But right now I'm just super happy to be playing doubles with Bianca here again and here in Toronto in front of the Canadian crowd.

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