

# National Bank Open

Tuesday, August 6, 2024

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

## Elina Svitolina

### Press Conference



E. SVITOLINA/S. Rogers

6-0, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Who has the first question for Elina?

**Q. Just your initial thoughts on the match and just your performance and level. Obviously, very busy summer, so we're all trying to figure out where y'all are kind of at energy-wise and mentally starting the hard courts.**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, definitely happy with the win today. It's not easy, I mean, for everybody to change in the few days the surface and play a completely different kind of atmosphere, I would say.

I feel much lighter now, you know, in a way, because of course Olympics were quite stressful, and for me of course always I put a lot of pressure on myself. I feel like now I'm more, like, playing freely. I was not nervous today at all (laughing). Yeah, just enjoyed the first round today. I was trying to get used to the court as quick as possible and, yeah, happy with the straight sets.

**Q. I spoke to Naomi the other day, and she's obviously coming back from her maternity leave, and she spoke about getting comfortable with her body again and how tough it was to even regain foot speed. Curious of how your experience was and what was the challenge for you to kind of regain your core strength as well as your speed on the court.**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, it was all a process of months and months to get back into the good form. Then, of course, match form is very different, because you can be really feeling good on the practice court, but then when you have to go to play a match or a tournament, a big tournament, a lot of stress, a lot of pressure, a lot of, you know, different feelings are in your body, in your head.

This is what was the toughest for me personally, because I was feeling really well on the practice court, and then it took me some time to be focused from the start until the

end to regain the focus. We are playing at such a high level and, you know, every player is really difficult, and you need to keep the focus for two hours, for three hours in tough matches.

For me, this was a big challenge, and, yeah, foot work, everything else is also the part of this. Yeah, at one moment I feel like it just clicks and you feel much better, you don't think about it any more because you are just one of the tennis players competing and trying to win a tournament.

**Q. Hard to believe it's been seven years since you won this title here, and I'm curious to know what it is about this venue, this tournament, maybe this crowd that you enjoy playing in front of so much, and given that there is a significant Ukrainian population here in Toronto, have you ever had a chance to meet any of them, to feel the support that they have given you over the years?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, shocking it's been seven years (laughing) since I won the title. I mean, yeah, it was a long time ago. I feel like it was just a couple of years ago. I love to play here. It's one of my favorite weeks to come to play. This was the decision for me to, really easy decision after the Olympics. Of course, it's a big challenge, but I feel like it's a nice, organized tournament and a lot of fans are coming to watch you practice, play, and great support, so it makes it a bit easier to make this transition.

I know that there are a lot of Ukrainians as well. I saw many flags. I remember the support that I got here years ago, and throughout the years there have been many Ukrainians coming and supporting me.

Now, with the war, of course, there are even more people, and I'm really thankful for Canadian people, Canadian government to support us and to give us, you know, the second home.

**Q. I could be wrong, but I saw Andy Bettles around. Are you guys working together again, and can you just talk through if that is the case the decision there.**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yes, we are, I mean, we are trying again (smiling.) Yeah, it's great to have him back on the



team. It was very different, I think it was, I don't know, three or four years ago, even more maybe, maybe four, that we worked together, but we worked for a long time, so we have great memories together. We had great five years with a lot of success, so when I stopped with Raemon it was kind of an easy decision for me, because I know him very well, we stayed friends during the years that we didn't work.

Now, in the middle of the season, it's not easy to switch, so that's why, yeah, we just had a chat with Andy and decided to try again.

**Q. It's very rare, especially for top players, to make that change from clay to hard court especially at this point of the season, given the switch from grass and all that. What is the one or two biggest adjustments or difficulties from coming from Paris and straight into a WTA 1000 on hard?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: I think the big one is the foot work, because everything goes quicker. Here, courts are pretty quick as well, so you need to adjust and try to focus on your fast feet. Yeah, I think this is something that I try to do, because movement is a big part of my game. Also, you know, when you move quick you react quick on the different kind of shots. Here, the rallies are shorter a little bit than on clay, so you have to be always aware, you have to be always on your toes and to be ready for quick ones.

**Q. I don't know if you or Naomi has spoken about her transitioning back to tour, but in terms of the mothers on the tour, is there kind of like an unspoken bond between the group of you?**

ELINA SVITOLINA: I don't know. I mean, I speak with a few of them, with Angie, with Caroline Wozniacki. You know, we practice together, we chat about our child (laughing), and, yeah, I feel like, you know, nice to have on tour some girls who went through a similar thing.

Everyone, of course, has their own different stories and different things that they went through, and difficulties, but I feel like, you know, it's nice to have, and I think also motivation that we're trying to push each other to become better, you know, to, yeah, just to try to win matches, to win tournaments. Yeah, to try to do it after the pregnancy is, I think, big inspiration, not only for tennis but in sports in general. I feel like now there are more possibilities for women to do that. I feel like we are all there trying to do the same thing, to motivate ladies to come back to their work after it.

**Q. This is not a tennis-related question. You have your own foundation, the Svitolina Foundation, where**

**you talk about community and training young kids to play tennis. I was wondering how is that going and why is that so important to you when it comes to giving back to the community, because everyone, a lot of people look at you as inspiration, we saw that on the court, that so many were waiting for you and they were cheering for you, so just wanted to know that.**

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yes, I have my foundation now. I feel like during these difficult times during the war, it's, for me, the mission to give the hope to the kids who play sport, especially tennis, because it's the sport that I play. I try to share my experience. Before the war when I launched my foundation in 2018 it was more about just introducing tennis in Ukraine, and now it's a different kind of mission that I have is to keep the dreams alive for the kids. It's very tough for them on a daily basis to see their parents being scared for the future, not knowing what's going to happen to them tomorrow. We organize tennis tournaments for the kids. We have tennis camps. We have also, which I'm really proud of, is the program for the mental health for them. This kind of project, these kind of programs that we have, they are like my little kids. I try to take care of them. I spend a lot of my free time on developing with my team who works for the foundation the new projects, new ideas, that can help kids to continue dreaming, to continue playing sports, and to have this small chance to express themselves and let this negativity out. I'm really proud of the work that we do with the Svitolina Foundation, and a lot of Ukrainians are joining in for different kind of projects and fundraisers as well, so, yeah, it's great to have this and I'm really proud of this mission.

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