

National Bank Open

Wednesday, August 7, 2024

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Leylah Fernandez

Press Conference



L. FERNANDEZ/N. Hibino

6-3, 5-7, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Who has the first question for Leylah?

Q. You've been preparing to face one opponent since the draw, I guess. When did you find out about the withdrawal and what challenges did that curveball present you?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I found out about the change of player I think at around 4:30, so I did have enough time. It was a little bit last minute, you know, we'd just spent a good amount, like 48 hours of analyzing my opponent, but, you know, a change of opponent happens, it's last minute, we just got to go with the flow.

For me I just tried to play my game. Today I didn't play too well, I made too many mistakes. I didn't even take advantage of the point as much as I would want to, and I let her back in, so credit to her, she took advantage of it.

Q. In the second set, we saw last night Bianca had a big dip in the second set too. Does the moment sort of get to you at certain points in the matches when you're playing on home court? Can you sort of talk us through that.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah, well I think you summarized it very well, a big dip (laughing). There was a huge dip in the second set. In the first set there was a little bit, a small one, but I was able to pick that up.

In the second set there was a big dip and I guess I gave her confidence. She didn't make the same mistakes as in the first set, she just went after it, and her balls went in. As I said, I didn't take advantage of the point quick enough. I wasn't the one that was offensive, the aggressor, she was, that was a big difference. Second set, it's a set that I would like to forget (laughing).

Q. In general the fans here all seem to be here to see

you. There's been a real increase in appreciation and respect for women's sports in general. How do you think that's affecting you and your career?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: You know, first of all, I'm actually extremely happy that there's a lot of fans that are coming to watch women's sport, women's tennis. I know women's soccer is growing, WNBA is big in the U.S. For me I always want to see the stadium full because that's what us athletes, that's what we want, that's what we do. We want to fill up the stadiums, we want to feel that energy, that love, the passion that they have for the game, it warms our heart.

For me it just means that our work is being appreciated, our hard work off the court and the talent that we try to show on court is being viewed as a good thing. I think there's a lot of players that are voicing their opinions. For me I'm just happy that there's not only older fans, but there's younger fans too. You can see that the sport is growing, you can see that women's sport is also growing, and hopefully in the future we can also inspire young girls to keep playing tennis or keep playing their sport and to just continue their passion.

Q. Of course in doubles with your sister as well. How do you sort of navigate that tomorrow, obviously playing singles, but also the doubles, you got to take care of your body, how do you sort of approach tomorrow?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think, first of all, the body feels good. There's no worries there. I just feel happy that the hard work that we've been doing the past couple of years is paying off. The only thing that I can do is focus on the singles first, and then in the doubles just have fun with my sister as we did in the first round.

I think for me it's just an opportunity to play with her, to have fun, to feel that sisterly love on court from the same side and not the opposite side. Even if it's training, opposite sides is a little bit different. For me I'm just happy that I get to share the court with her. Hopefully it goes well and we get to continue this adventure.

Q. This year how did you, what adjustments did you have to make to going from clay to grass to clay, the



**surface change because of playing in the Olympics,
how did you make that adjustment?**

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: We didn't try to change much from our training. I think a little bit on the fitness side we tried to, well, you got to ask that of my fitness coach and my coach. On the fitness side we did implement a couple of, like, the technical side, like change of directions, being able to change on clay where it slides a little bit more, and then on hard where it's a little bit, like you can't slide as much, so you got to be able to be strong in your tendons and ligaments. We just strengthened that, and then, as I say, you got to ask them, because they know more in details.

For me I think the most important thing is my mentality. I told them when I saw this change of surface, it's like, Well, let's just think of it as I'm like 11 years old. At 11 years old I remember we were at a training camp and we were able to change surface from hard to clay to grass within one hour. And we did not complain, like that's just kind of how it was because the courts weren't always available to the younger kids. We had fun with it, we did not complain, we just went out there and played, because that's ultimately our goal.

For me I just thought of that mentality and so far it's paying off. I think a positive mindset and not seeing too much of the negative helps a lot, and it brings in good vibes.

Q. Do you actually have to tweak proprioception and make changes to the hand-eye coordination because the ball behaves differently from surface to surface?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: You know, that you got to ask my coaches, because for me, as I said, see the ball, hit the ball, don't overcomplicate things, follow the instructions of my fitness trainer and my coach.

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