

Omnium Banque Nationale

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Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Leylah Fernandez

Press Conference



L. FERNANDEZ/P. Stearns

6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on the win. How does it feel to get your first victory this week in Montreal?

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: Thank you everyone for coming. It feels amazing. I'm super happy I got my first win here in Montreal. It means the world to me.

I thought I played a solid match. I'm glad that the crowd came and enjoyed the match. That was the most important thing for me. Obviously getting the win meant the world.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. How did you feed off the crowd today?

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: The crowd was amazing. I felt their positivity, their emotions, and I love that they came and supported both of us.

They were very respectful to my opponent and to me. So I think the crowd has been amazing, and I'm just happy that I was able to play in front of a packed house for the first time here in Montreal. I've heard that it has a lot of good atmosphere.

Every time that I did come and watch, it was called the Rogers Cup back then. I came here with my family, and the atmosphere has been amazing, and it has always been a dream of mine to play here in front of a packed house. The crowd has just been tremendous for me. Thank you.

Q. Leyla, what did you learn from your last match against Peyton, and now you are going up against Haddad Maia. You played her twice last year. Split the matches. What do you expect tomorrow?

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: Yeah, against Peyton, she's a very good player. It's never easy to play against her. Last time I played against her in Morocco, it wasn't our best match, but she made less mistakes, and I unfortunately did a lot.

Today I tried to really focus on my own game and just put in one more ball back in, being the one on the offensive side, and I was glad I was able to execute the game plan.

Concerning about my next round match, it's going to be a very hard match. Bia, she's having a tremendous year so far. She's playing really well with a lot of confidence.

I'm just going to talk with my coach and see what's the game plan, what we're going to work on and what we're going to train and try to execute it as much as possible.

Q. Did today's win come easier than you imaged? If so, what do you think went into getting into the zone?

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: No, today's match was actually harder. There's a lot of nerves going around. First round match is always hard. Not only because of the nerves, but for me also I'm playing in front of a home crowd. I want to do well for them.

I'm happy that I was able to just do my routines, and by doing my routines it helped me get in the zone and just focus on the ball, and the result came. I was just happy that I was able to do what I practiced and execute the game plan.

Q. With that being said, what are some of your routines and rituals that make you confident going into a match?

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: Before my match I do like to listen to some '80s music, and then I also like to play a little bit of soccer, football, to keep the body loose.

During the match I like to -- I think as you've seen before, I like to move my feet a lot, do some butt-kicks, keep my feet moving. That helps me get rid of the nerves.

Obviously looking at my box, they're always so confident. With that when I see their confidence, I know that they have the belief in me, and I should just also believe in myself.

Q. Would you say it was a 2021 match, that period where everything was working well? Do you feel that



you're playing very well today?

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: You know, I think in the 2021 time I'm a completely different person. I was a completely different person.

Right now I have the experience. I've gone through some good times, some bad times, and I think now I'm actually better than what I was doing in 2021, and we're just trying to build on that. We're trying to keep working hard, keep trusting the process.

Mistakes will happen. Matches will be lost. The most important thing is if we make the necessary corrections, and I'm happy with the team that I have that they always try to find ways to make me be better and always pushing me to be the best version of myself. So I think that's what's the most important thing at the moment for 2023.

2021 is in the past. We try to forget about it and just build on what we have at the moment.

Q. Playing here at home must be different for your routine. How do you prepare to play here? There's a lot of distractions you have to sort of try to get beyond.

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: You know, I think playing at home there is a lot of people. There is a lot of family and friends who are here, but I do have a great team who is around me who is helping me manage that.

I try to make time for them, but they also understand that I'm doing a job here, and they do give me space, and I love that from them. I love that they respect my space, and they give me time to focus on my tennis.

I think they also know that they are here to watch me play and that they get to spend time with their family members, and that's the best thing that can happen to them.

So I think we've done a good job of managing the -- I wouldn't say external pressure and neither distraction because family is never a distraction. They're more a motivator for me, so I think they've done a good job in keeping me grounded and just knowing that I am doing a job right now.

Q. Can you give your team a plug? Who is in your team?

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: Who is in my team? I do have my dad; my fitness trainer, Tom; and then this week I am getting some help from a long-time coach that has helped me from the junior days, Francisco.

I do have my two agents, John and Joel. My social media manager, who is also my cousin, Destiny, and then I do have family members who are here as supporters.

THE MODERATOR: We'll switch to French.

Q. You already had a win in Canada, but not here in Montreal last year, so is it special for you to win that match on center court? Is it special?

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: I've been expecting that since 2018 when I played my first quallie match. It was a dream for me to win a match here in Montreal in front of a complete full stadium, and I'm happy that I managed to reach my goal, and I hope now I'll be able to win another match.

Q. It's the second time you've been winning your first round match. Is it important for you to win those matches to earn points? Is that what you want to talk about?

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: I don't want to talk about the ranking. You always want to win a match when you play it. As to the ranking, I try not to look at it too much because I don't want to put pressure on myself, but winning a first match here in Montreal, for me it means the world.

I'm very happy. It gives me more motivation to work hard and to follow my path because I know we're working well right now, and it helps me prepare well for the Grand Slams.

Q. Can you talk about that match? At the end of the first set she broke. You were a bit nervous.

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: Yes, I was a bit nervous at the end of that first set, and Peyton started to play better. She made fewer mistakes, and I was only trying to play one point after the other. At 5-3 I had another opportunity, and I was trying to focus on the ball and not on the score.

In the second set I was happy I could calm down. At the end she started playing better, and I just played one point after the other, and I just tried to play the match plan that we had thought about, and I was trying to be the most aggressive player on the court.

Q. You made five aces. You served well in this match.

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: Yes, I was happy that I was able to serve well in important moments. I worked a lot on my serve. It helps me a lot. I made many first serves, and it helps me control the point.

Lately the serve was not a strong shot for me, so we



worked on it, and I'm very happy that I was able to improve it and execute during this match.

Q. You were saying you were listening to the music from the '80s. Why the '80s?

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: I don't know why I'm listening to the music of the '80s, but I started listening to that music because of my father because he made me listen to a few songs, and I liked them.

I like to listen to that before the match because it motivates me and calms me down before the match. "Don't Stop Believing" is one of my favorite songs, and I listen to Billy Idol, Bon Jovi, Def Leppard. I listen to the legends, in fact.

Q. I know you said that in English, but I would like to know what you think of your next opponent? It's going to be a big match.

LEYLA FERNANDEZ: Yes, it's going to be a big match. She's a good player. She had an incredible year. She's very confident right now. I will try to play one point after the other.

I will talk with my coach about the match plan, and we'll try to play that match plan as much as possible.

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