

HSBC Championships

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Queens Club

Heather Watson

Press Conference

H. WATSON/Y. Putintseva

6-4, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, Heather. Many congratulations on your opening win. How pleased are you with that match?

HEATHER WATSON: Very happy to be through here at Queen's. First time playing here for everyone. It's such a great event so far, and I'm really enjoying playing here, playing on these courts at this amazing club, and staying at home, sleeping in my own bed.

Yeah, I have played three matches now, and I feel like I'm getting better and better with each match. Just enjoying and lapping it all up, grass court season at home.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Well done. I know you have had some success at the 125s and the ITFs, but I believe this is your first WTA Tour main-draw win since September. What are the emotions around getting that on the board?

HEATHER WATSON: I didn't even realize. Yeah, just happy to get a win today, mostly because it really helps my ranking and helps me into future events. But just taking each win as it comes and wanting to keep climbing up the rankings and hopefully do well at Wimbledon, as well.

Q. On playing at Queen's, for years you have come here, you have trained here, I don't know if you have come to watch the ATP event a couple of times, as well. Can you sum up what it means to have a women's event here? Yeah, what it feels like to be on those courts? Because it's such a historic club, as well.

HEATHER WATSON: Yeah, it's incredible. When I first heard, I was so excited. I have been here I think twice before. Once just to practice on the clay courts, actually, and once to come and watch the men's tennis.

I remember when I came as a spectator to watch it, I just



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thought what an incredible event. Especially the center court, it's so intimate. And, yeah, to have such a prestigious event here in London, which is where British tennis is all centered around, as well, most of the players live here and train here, it's special for everybody.

Q. It feels quite appropriate that there is a sort of group of British women who we think will win a couple of rounds here, and you're obviously part of that. I think it's the first time since the '80s we have had three women in the top 50, obviously with Emma, Katie, and Sonay getting into the top 50 on Monday. Can you talk a bit about how important it is to have other people around your ranking who you know well and maybe who are from the same country on tour, just so you have a few more familiar faces? I imagine when you were British No. 1, maybe you were the only one in that kind of area of the rankings?

HEATHER WATSON: It's funny you say that, because I was talking about it the other day, and I was saying I think it's the first time that there has been three, because I remember through my whole career, whether it was Jo and me or me and Laura, it was always just two people sort of spurring each other along. Usually there was quite a big gap even between the two people.

Then you have those three that you just mentioned in the top 50 who are so close in ranking and doing so well. I think they're all spurring each other along and spurring everybody else along. And it's the best women's tennis has been in my whole career.

Q. Just on the British No. 1 thing, can you talk about what pride you take from having held that title, what it meant to get it for the first time, and to hang on to it for as long as you did?

HEATHER WATSON: I actually appreciate it more now when I get introduced as former British No. 1, or I don't think I really appreciated it enough at the time what I had achieved. I feel like usually with achievements, it's when you look back, and you're, like, I did that.

Yeah, I would say I appreciate it even more now than I did at the time.

Q. On that, is that on some level because especially



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this time of year the pressure ramps up especially for the British No. 1, going to Wimbledon, grass court season, there is just so much attention around this part of the season? I can imagine that comes with a whole lot of different challenges, I guess, when you're at the top ranking?

HEATHER WATSON: Yeah, I think, I mean, Boults has been the top-ranked Brit for a while now, and I think she handles everything beautifully.

I don't think it changes her perspective on anything or how she approaches -- I mean, you'll have to ask her, but from the outside, I think she handles it so well.

But I think regardless of where you're ranked in Britain, I think everyone wants to do well at home. I feel like all of us deal with the pressure well in the sense that we don't feel it as pressure; we feel it as motivation.

Q. Obviously having been British No. 1, there have been people on the grounds saying that they want to see you this week. Have you been feeling that appreciation now that you are here at Queen's for the first time?

HEATHER WATSON: That's really nice to hear. My first match of qualifying was almost a packed stadium if not a packed stadium, which was so nice to see, especially for qualifying after the rain delays the day before. That just gave me all the energy, all the good vibes.

Yeah, I had a lady after my second-round qualifying saying, Heather, please keep playing for many, many more years. I love watching you.

I was, like, Okay. I'll try my best (smiling).

But it just really gives you a real boost, and so nice to hear those kind words.

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