

HSBC Championships

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Queens Club

Heather Watson

Press Conference

E. RYBAKINA/H. Watson

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THE MODERATOR: Heather, obviously not the result you were hoping for today, but what were your thoughts on the match?

HEATHER WATSON: Really tough match today. Knew that going in. Thought it took me a while to feel settled, and same for her, and also figure a few things out tactically, which I thought was too late by the time she started to feel settled.

But it's been a decent week here for me, getting matches under the belt against really good players, and lots of positives to take away. She was just too good today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. How are you feeling generally about the grass? What does the schedule look like for you before Wimbledon?

HEATHER WATSON: Grass court season is my favorite time of the year. I have entered every single week. If there were more weeks, I would have entered those, as well.

Yeah, feeling really good about my game. I think it helped me a lot coming into this week having Birmingham 125 last week. Got me that time on the grass, match practice, and that really helped coming in here.

Next I'm off to Nottingham tomorrow.

Q. Wondered how much you have enjoyed this event, what the atmosphere has been like, and the general feel of it?

HEATHER WATSON: This event has been incredible. From my first match of qualifying, I played on Court 1, and the stand was almost full. And the support has been amazing this week. The crowd's been really involved and vocal, and I have loved playing here so much.



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And also, with the club, having that sort of big history, and it's felt really special, sort of Wimbledon vibes. Getting to play on the center court today for the first time, it's such a nice court to play on, so intimate. The stand's huge. It kind of feels a bit surreal.

Q. Did it feel like a typical tennis crowd?

HEATHER WATSON: No. I came from Birmingham last week, and it felt quite polite, and then this week I felt I really had the crowd behind me. I feel like, because it's in London, you get more of the -- and it's a big tournament, maybe you get more of a diverse crowd rather than, I don't know...

So, yeah, I felt a lot of support here this week.

Q. Playing against such a top opponent, I wonder, how much does that give you an indication of where your level's at? Or do you prefer kind of having -- I don't know. Do you prefer having that kind of top opponent at this point of the grass court season to just see where your potential is, what you have to work on, that kind of thing?

HEATHER WATSON: I was actually talking about exactly that with my coach after the match. It was a good test for me today, because I have been playing more tournaments on the ITF circuit and the lower levels. It was good for me to feel her ball and play against a top-10 player and Grand Slam champion. I wish maybe it was a round or two later, but that's okay (smiling).

But yeah, it was really good for me to get a gauge of where I'm at, and I feel like I can take away a lot of positives from how I played today.

Q. You mentioned there about having kind of a good crowd here in Britain, and it's been 10 years since the Serena match at Wimbledon. I wonder what your memories of that are a decade on, how you look back on that, is that still something you think about?

HEATHER WATSON: It's kind of wild, that's 10 years ago? God, I feel like it was maybe four or five years ago, but yeah, that was one of or "the" best atmosphere I have ever played in front of, I think, being the occasion, third round Wimbledon, total underdog against the best player in the world. I'm pretty sure she had won



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Australian Open and French Open leading into it, and then she ended up winning the tournament.

To come so close against someone who was my idol growing up, against someone I had never shared the court with before, was an amazing occasion for me and one I'll always carry with me as one of the highlights, even though I didn't come out on top.

But I definitely did myself justice that day. That's why she is the GOAT, because, you know, she came back from that and then won the tournament like it was nothing.

Q. Is there anything that sticks in your mind from that day?

HEATHER WATSON: Yeah. I just feel, when I think back to that match, was every time I won a point and I was using the crowd and embracing the occasion, I'd get goose bumps, because it was so loud you could not hear. It was a roar every time I won a point.

That, for me, is what it so special. Sport is entertainment, you know, and I feel that way being an athlete. I don't want to play in empty stadiums. I don't want to play on small courts. That's what it's all about.

Q. Being back on this court today, playing so well against a Grand Slam champion, does that sort of occasion keep you going?

HEATHER WATSON: Absolutely. I had a few nerves going out there today. I think it's been a while since I have been on a bigger court against a top player, and it was really good for me to see where I was at level-wise.

I'm feeling good about my game after this tournament and really believe in myself for the rest of the grass court season. I really have that motivation and that hunger to be playing matches consistently on courts like that and tournaments like this.

Q. Wimbledon wildcard, is that quite hopeful?

HEATHER WATSON: I mean, I'm praying over here. Hopefully you can all pray for me, too (smiling). But, yeah, it would be an amazing gift, but it's their decision.

Q. What's your doubles plans? We saw Emma and Katie play together. What are you doing for the next couple of weeks?

HEATHER WATSON: I'm sort of, like, taking each week as it comes. I'm planning on playing the doubles with Emily Appleton at Wimbledon. We were going to play in Nottingham as well, but the cut in Nottingham is so high.

So, yeah, anyone that will have me (smiling).

Q. No line judges this summer. Are you missing them? What's the emotion, the fact that you go out there and there's no officials on court anymore?

HEATHER WATSON: I feel I have a lot of trust in the electronic system, and I have really had a horrendous experience in Birmingham last week with bad line calls. I challenged so many balls on crucial points in my match against Ponchet, and it ruined the match for me. So I was kind of grateful this week that we had the electronic.

Q. There were line judges in Birmingham?

HEATHER WATSON: Yes. But fortunately I was on center court, could challenge, but you still have to replay points if you've, you know...

Q. A random question.

HEATHER WATSON: I love random questions.

Q. As a player in tennis, the start times of your matches are obviously dictated by the match before. Sometimes if the match before you is crazy, it can be quite long, can be warming up multiple times. It can get quite tedious and stressful. What's the worst experience you've had with that? What's that like, preparing for that if someone misses match points or something like that?

HEATHER WATSON: Yeah, I'm quite a chill warmer-upper. I like to save all my energy for the court. I more sort of warm up my mind, warm up my back, do a few hand/eye coordination things. But I'm not the type to warm up for 30 minutes on the bike and sweating before I go out.

Everyone is different. For me it works out quite well if the match goes on longer, like, it's fine. To be honest, just so used to it, it's just normal. Same for everybody.

Q. You said at the beginning that it feels a bit like Wimbledon vibes here, having such a big event. How useful is it for players, especially a lot of British players where there is so much more attention on Wimbledon for you guys to have an event like this, for the women to have a big event like this, to just kind of get used to those surroundings again, to have that kind of support, attention, and a big event to really build up to?

HEATHER WATSON: Yeah, I think it's huge for tennis in this country. I feel like women's and men's tennis are at the highest maybe they have ever been. I'm looking back throughout my career, but, you know, we've got Jack in the top 10 on the men's side and loads of male players doing well, singles, doubles. Same on the women's side, the most women in the top 100 for I don't

know how long.

I feel like having a big tournament here in London, which is the home of British tennis, which is where pretty much all the players live and train, it's huge and very special for us and feels kind of like a reward.

Yeah, just so grateful for this event. It's been so special for me personally getting to play here and stay at home, sleep in my own bed.

Q. Another random question. I saw the video you like Lime biking. From here, right? How often do you do that? In Roehampton earlier this year, I was driving, and you went right past me on the bike from the ITF event. How often do you do that?

HEATHER WATSON: That's my means of transport. Since my car was stolen, and it's just been the bane of my life, I'm in the process of selling it, but again, still such a pain -- don't get a car; that's my advice -- I'm a Lime biker through and through. Rain or shine, I'm on my bike, that's how I get to the NTC every day. That's how I got home yesterday from site because it takes ten minutes.

I love cycling, and I feel like it's kind of a type of meditation for me, as well. I just really enjoy being out in the fresh air cycling. It's a great warmup, about 20 minutes from where I live to the NTC, so it's perfect for me.

I won't be getting another car. I'm a cyclist. They used to drive my crazy, but now I'm one of them and I have a different perspective.

Q. How did your car get stolen? What's the story behind that?

HEATHER WATSON: Oh, I won't bore you, but a couple years ago it got stolen, and it's just been breaking down ever since. Insurance, biggest scam ever. They just try and rinse you.

Yeah, disaster. I get discriminated against because I'm an athlete. So your prices are already -- forget the cars. Not forever, but for now.

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