

Porsche Tennis Grand Prix

Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Germany

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Elena Rybakina

Press Conference

E. RYBAKINA/V. Kudermetova

7-6, 1-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on your opening-match win. Can you describe your thoughts after this match.

ELENA RYBAKINA: Thank you. Yeah, it was a very tough first match for me on clay. I think it's great that I managed to win. Really happy with the win.

It was a tough battle. First match on clay also. I needed to be more patient also during the rallies and a lot of ups and downs, but overall happy with the win. Looking forward for the next match.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. In terms of preparation for the clay season, obviously it's your first match, but you got here a little bit later than some of the other players. How comfortable do you feel right now as the clay season starts?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, of course we practiced. We had one week. I would say that physically I'm feeling fine. It's just a question of playing matches and just to switch your mentality and game plan for longer rallies and also serves. For example, I cannot always hit an ace and get free points, so it's just to switch the mentality and have patience.

But I think with the matches, like always, you're just going to get better and better.

Q. Is it easy for you to stay focused on court over there where you are looking up and you see all those lights, the cars, and the big screen and everything?

ELENA RYBAKINA: No, I usually into the zone, like it's been always my thing. Sometimes I actually need opposite, to look at my opponent. Sometimes I'm too focused on myself, so I won't say that anything around



distracts me.

Q. You said that physically you're feeling great. How about mentally? Are you feeling absolute top, top confidence level, or is it somewhere else at the moment?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Oh, of course I'm confident. I played so many matches. I mean, it's just, as I said, always on clay you kind of want to have a bit more, but I'm pretty confident in my game. So, yeah.

Q. You played now against Veronika. It was No. 4. Last three games you won also. What was surprise with her game today for you?

ELENA RYBAKINA: I mean, we played a lot of times, and it was always tough matches. I won't say that a lot of things surprised me. It's just matter of getting used to the clay, as I said, and here, I would say it's special courts.

So we both were serving well, and these moments when it's line or things like this, of course it's not easy, but I think we both played well. I'm just happy that in the end I could turn it around. And even though I had these ups and downs, I was leading in the third set, lost couple of games, but managed to win.

Q. Last year obviously the big win in Rome and good success on this surface. Did you feel as though that was a big boost to your confidence in being able to succeed on the clay and win big titles, whether it be 1000s like Rome or Roland Garros, or did it not impact your belief because you already believed that you could do that?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, I always believed that I can play good on clay. My actually first win on the WTA was on clay.

It's just the season is quite short, and of course me, for example, I need a bit more time to get used, to adapt, to play some matches.

But overall I think that I can play well on all the surfaces. Last year it was great tournament in Rome, and then



French Open, I actually feel also well there. I like the courts. It's just I was unlucky with sickness, so I think I'm doing pretty well for now (smiling).

Q. Yesterday I watched your practice, and I saw the beginning you were working a lot without the ball. You were focusing on your movement around the court. I was wondering if this is something that you are working at the moment in the transition from the hard court season to the clay season, or is it something that you usually do when you're at the tournament?

ELENA RYBAKINA: No, of course these kind of warmups we usually do, but now we prefer to do it on clay court since we need to slide a lot, so to adapt a little bit.

Yeah, I think that's the main focus, to slide. This tournament is still, I think, preparation for the big ones.

Q. I think of you as somebody who tends to prefer quicker conditions? Wimbledon champion, Australian Open finalist, et cetera. So when it comes to the clay, I'm thinking maybe Rome is not so much for Elena, maybe French Open not so much, and yet you won Rome. Do you have, of these sort of four tournaments, with Stuttgart, Madrid, Rome, and Paris, is there one of the four that you think is best for you and you feel most confident on?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, it's tough to say. I like a faster surface, and I think in Madrid it's quite fast. For now I was not successful there, but I think that's great tournament for me.

I mean, Rome was nice. As I said, French Open, I like the courts. It's just the question of good preparation and, yeah, be healthy. And then it's all depends on you and of course on the opponent.

Q. Back to the match today, am I wrong saying that your inside-in forehand was pretty reliable but the regular along-the-line wasn't?

ELENA RYBAKINA: Well, there is a lot of things I can say I could have done better, but I think for the first match it was still good and there is a lot of work still, some details here and there, but I'm happy with the match (smiling).

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