

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, FL USA

Elena Rybakina

Press Conference



E.RYBAKINA | J.Pegula

2-6, 6-3, 6-4

Moderator: Elena, give us your impression of the match.

Elena Rybakina: It was a very difficult match. I did not start that well, but I am happy I managed to turn it around.

Moderator: Questions?

Question: Just talking about that 3-2 game, when you held after the kind of tough struggles with the errors and the overhead. Just how important was it to get through that game and to kind of turn the match around?

Elena Rybakina: I feel like each game was kind of important and, of course, I made a lot of unforced errors. And, as I said, in the first set I was rushing a little bit and made many mistakes. But Jessica played really well. The conditions I needed to get used a little bit, since the previous match I played late, and her game also is fast and the ball stays low. So, I'm happy that overall, I found the way was not rushing as much in the second set and won these important games.

Question: You talk a lot about improving your net game and trying to improve that side of your game, and I think you showed it today. You played a couple of crazy volleys in the third set. I think at 3-2 in that game.

Elena Rybakina: Yeah, a couple of times. Good luck here. I mean, it was very difficult shot, but I'm happy that, somehow, I was staying at the net, and I feel like here probably it helps even more to finish the rallies. But overall, of course, the coaches are pushing me to come to the net more, because whenever I come, most of the time, I win the points. I'm happy that I was at the net a little bit more, but definitely, I need more improvement in that.

Question: At the start of your career, how did you feel at the net then, compared to now?

Elena Rybakina: Moments and moments, I feel like there were time when I was coming to the net more frequently and sometimes I used to use some drop shots, but it all depends on how confident you are and who you are playing against. So, I think that today, this game at the net definitely helped, even if I was missing some drive volleys, and some other shots at the net. Overall, I think that's my game, and I'm happy that at least I started with these.

Question: Before my real question, are you a Yankee fan?

Elena Rybakina: Just a hat, guys.

Question: We were asking Jessica what makes you so tough right now? And she said that you are playing with great confidence, and that you make big second serves when you need to. How much more confident do you feel now than, say, six months ago before you sort of went on this roll? And what do you think gives you that confidence to

serve (15 aces you served today), and just hit the great plus-one shots, things like that, in tough situations?

Elena Rybakina: I think the more matches you play, the more you win. Of course, it gives you confidence. I played many matches, also where the score was close, and a lot of important moments. So, I think it's always been for me, a lot of matches, which helps with a confidence, with a decision on the court. Overall, I felt like last year I was trying to find my game. I was struggling a little bit, but now we're doing a good job with the team. We have a plan for each match and I'm trying to follow it. Of course, sometimes we need to adapt and change something during the match, but everything has been working pretty well for now. So, hopefully, I can just continue.

Question: We don't know who you are going to play yet, but if it is Sabalenka, you've played her so many times in big matches so far in the last few months. Are you enjoying being part of a big rivalry at the top of the game and others? Obviously, lots of different legendary rivalries have happened through the history of the sport. So this is for you to lock in with another top player and play the same player over and over for high stakes matches. Is that's something that you are enjoying at all?

Elena Rybakina: Well, I'm just on the, let's say, path of this consistency for now this year has been good. But I feel like the season is not even halfway yet, and it's great to play against Aryna. Always pushing each other, as I say, and you can see what you need to improve. So, if she wins, it's going to be another

challenge, where I will need to serve well and really take care of my game, knowing that on the other side, she can hit a lot of good shots, also winners, good serve. So, we'll try to focus on myself more, try to stay somehow fresh for the match, and we'll see again what's going to happen.

Question: Jess mentioned your ability at the big points to raise the level of your game. How are you able to do that? And what you know in terms of raising the level on those key points?

Elena Rybakina: Well, my coaches always tell me about these moments, when I need to push myself more, when I need to put this extra energy on the serve, stay more intense in these rallies. And I think that for now, when I listen and when I'm able to show it, of course it works. But still, there are opportunities where I can maybe get the game easier, but I start struggling again. So, I feel, it's, it's working, but as I say, there is always plenty of things to improve.

Question: What do you feel is the most important part of your tennis? Is it the physical side of it? Is it the mental side of it that you're proud and you feel the most comfortable with, or is it some other aspect?

Elena Rybakina: Well, the physical part is the most important, I will say, because if you're healthy and you're stable, physically, it's easier to play. It's easier to do something with the racket on the courts. The coaches cannot do anything with me on the court, if I'm physically not ready or I'm not healthy. So, I think the physical part is very important. And then, of course, mental. You could have the shots, but

you need the confidence to make right decisions in important moments. So, I will say, it all goes together. And for now, I'm pretty happy with how I am handling this season so far, physically also. I played a lot of matches in key tournaments. And for now, the consistency is there, which is a good thing, and mentally also in this tough matches, finding a way.

Question: Obviously, we don't know who you'll be playing, but if Hailey were to win (I know you played her recently in Indian Wells and in Montreal last year) just what aspects of her game do you think are challenging, given that you played her very recently?

Elena Rybakina: I think she, she's been playing really well. I saw some moments, and she has a good serve, of course, when it works, and she has really good hands. She can come to the net. She has the slices, and overall, she is also trying to be aggressive. So, for me, it will be important just to focus again on my on my serve and just shots overall, moving well. And yeah, I think that no matter what, I will give my best.