

Porsche Tennis Grand Prix

Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Germany

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Elina Svitolina

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Elina, welcome back to Stuttgart. How does it feel to be here, and how has your preparation been going?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, very happy to be back after some years. Yeah, just trying to enjoy as much time as I can on the courts and the very beautiful tournament here.

Yeah, just excited about the matches.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. So obviously this tournament is very unique where it's indoor clay court. I know you have just played Billie Jean King on indoor clay. What do you think about adjusting to this type of surface? What maybe makes it difficult or challenging, given that it's not very common on tour?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, we were lucky enough to actually play indoor in Poland, so the surface pretty much similar to this one.

Just the ball was flying a bit differently, but, you know, cannot complain, because I was training in Ukraine the week before Poland and then Poland with the team and just arriving here feeling quite good.

I think, you know, this tournament is as strong as it could be. So, yeah, it's nice to train and to get some matches here, as well.

Q. Yesterday I was at your practice on Court No. 2 and I saw many, many people asking you for pictures or autographs before you got into the court. Probably someone was also speaking Ukrainian, I think. I just wonder if you feel that right now you can have some more support from the people, especially from your people also, of course, considering what's going on in Ukraine?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, I feel there are a lot of support in any tournament where I go to play. Many Ukrainians I think now, more and more with Internet and with all the



social media, there are more Ukrainians aware what tennis is and when they can come and support us.

Tennis in general is getting more popular over the years, and I feel with now I think it's six Ukrainians in top 100, which is amazing for Ukrainian tennis, I think people are starting to discover more the sport. And kids, especially girls, are going, you know, to trainings and, you know, really playing tennis.

So it's nice to have that and I feel for our country to be united together, and I think also sports unite us for the goal to win as many matches in football, boxing, tennis, and other sports. It's beautiful thing, because of course when there is a war ongoing, it's difficult to be in the same routine and being under the attacks every single day. So it's nice to bring them some good news and some wins.

Q. Also very emotional moments in the Billie Jean King Cup and during the National Anthem. Do you feel more pressure playing for your country or more individual tournaments?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Definitely playing for my country, playing Olympics or the team competitions, Billie Jean King Cup, is always special for me. I try to really be as prepared as possible, because I feel that's where there are more support and more important moments for my country.

Definitely I think the moment that stands out in my career is bringing the bronze medal from Tokyo, the first one in tennis for Ukraine. Yeah, just every time that I step on the court and seeing a flag, Ukrainian flag, next to me, adds up a little bit more pressure, but it also motivates me every single day to do my very best, because the people in Ukraine are having very difficult times on a daily basis, and I'm very lucky person to represent on such a big stage my country.

Q. We had the opportunity to talk to one young player who was supported by your foundation. Just asking how many of them were involved in this kind of help?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, there were, at the beginning of the war, there were hundreds of kids that we supported on a different level. Could be just with clothing, could be with



relocation of the players.

Also, right now, we are a little bit restructured now. The foundation, we have different programs. We have tournaments in Ukraine for the kids, under-12, under-14. Then we have a mental health program that goes a couple of times a year, and 50 to 60 kids are going through every single year.

Also a master class that I go five, six times a year to do that with Sergiy Stakhovsky around Ukraine, different cities, small cities, big cities. So, yeah, we do different kind of things for Ukrainian tennis. It's important I think for kids to get a little bit of inspiration from some professional players.

Yeah, I feel like it's my kind of mission to have that, to share the moments with them. We see, at the master class, 400, 500 kids coming from all over Ukraine to share these moments, to hit some balls with us. You know, when you see the eyes lit up in their faces, really, really touching my heart, and I want to do more and more.

Of course, you know, with the time, with the schedule, is very difficult. But as soon as I have a moment, I go back to Ukraine, and yeah, I feel like it's a thing that I have to do.

Q. I think I saw on social media that you recently opened a padel club. Curious what led to that, your inspiration of doing that, and what do you hope to get out of that endeavor?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, it's a very evolving sport. You know, of course I want to open a tennis club, tennis academy, in Ukraine. This is the main goal, but right now we found a space, a good space for padel club.

It's the sport that we discovered together with Sergiy, and we wanted to still for people to get involved into sport, because I believe that when you're in routine when there is a war, it's mentally very difficult. It's been four years and over four years that people are into these heavy days and tough moments.

Sport for kids and for people in general just releases all the anger, the tough moments, and you just switch to the good and positive emotions. Padel is very popular sport now, and I think when you start to do a sport, you want to get involved very quick. I think padel is that kind of sport that you can start at any level, and you can share with your friends the court, you can train together, you can, you know, really socialize.

For me, the goal is to not only promote tennis but also sport in general in Ukraine and to give people a chance to

discover something good for themselves.

Q. I think time is one factor when you travel back to Ukraine, but what about your safety? How do you manage your travels? I really can't imagine, being German and living here in peace.

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, the travel takes time, actually. It, like, can be 12, 15 hours I travel. I travel to Warsaw first, and then I take a car for another, like, 10 or 12 hours to go to Kyiv.

Of course, you know, I take a risk. I'm very lucky to have an understanding husband who lets me go back to my country. It's very important for me to really go back and, yeah, do these kind of things that I mentioned. Also to see my family, because my grandmother lives there, and I want to go and see her as much as I can.

Yeah, it's of course very, very tough to not have opportunity to fly back as we used to fly to Kyiv and just be there in couple of hours.

But all the emotions, all the thankful support that I get from Ukrainian people is, you know, I couldn't imagine doing any different.

Q. A question regarding the Billie Jean King Cup. As we saw a couple of former players also during the last week and starting the ventures of the captain of their respective national team, I just wonder if you would ever like to have this opportunity in your future after tennis, if you would like to be the captain of the Ukrainian national team?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Ah, it's a good question. I never really thought about it. Now, as my foundation is taking care now of Ukrainian woman's team, I feel like it's already a step and I think important step, because Ukrainian Federation, they ask us to take care of the team, and for the past three years, we have been doing it. Very happy to do it and, like, management kind of, because now we know the kitchen from inside (smiling).

Being the captain, I don't know. I think right now we have a good captain, Illya Marchenko, who used to play in a very good level. We have a good supporting team. As advisor, we have Sergiy Stakhovsky. When I go back to Ukraine, I train with him every time. He's very experienced guy and knows a lot also about the, you know, doubles, and I think for singles, also, he helps us a lot. So we have also a coach of the team. Ivan is very good.

So I think, you know, we have three former players, quite high level. So I think so far the team is doing well, so we

will see. Maybe in years and years, but yeah, I prefer more like behind the scenes and really that right now the foundation is involved in taking care of the team, is working good, and seems like the players are happy too.

Q. Only a few players have come back to the top 10 after becoming a mother. You are also one of them. It's a huge achievement. Can you say how do you manage so far motherhood while competing at this high level?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, it's a really great feeling to come back to top 10. It was a goal for me for this year and the last year, as well.

Still, I try to not get, like, full satisfaction from that, because I want to go higher. I want to reach high ranking. And of course the Grand Slam has always been a goal for me.

So, yeah, of course I draw a lot of confidence and good feeling from that achievement, but I want to go more and do better. Of course, you know, later, when I will finish with tennis, I will look back and appreciate, you know, this achievement.

Of course I think for mothers who are planning maybe to get a baby and then come back, I think it shows that it is possible. And there are, like, multiple players who have done that, and I'm just happy to be among those great players.

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