

Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships

Sunday, February 18, 2018

Elina Svitolina

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. This is really where your career took off last year.

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, it was actually the first, yeah, tournament where I went through probably the biggest year I had, reaching top 10. Winning the tournament was of course like push for me forward.

Q. How would you sum up your 2018 so far?

ELINA SVITOLINA: I think I've been good. More positive than negative. Of course, winning the first tournament of the year, playing well...

Still, you know, I think I'm playing good level. For me it's very, yeah, important to see that I'm improving each week, moving the right direction.

Q. Is there a different feeling? You've done it before, successfully defended a title before. Is it difficult for you becoming a champion and a top seed as well?

ELINA SVITOLINA: This year going to be a couple times for me, coming to big tournaments as defending champion. I'm going to have to get used to it.

Different feeling definitely for me. But, yeah, for me it's also very interesting to see how I'm going to handle it. Yeah, I'm ready for this challenge definitely.

Q. When you say 'different feeling', is it more pressure or I've won here before, I can do it again?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Well, I don't look at it as a pressure because I played well this year. I know what I have to do to be ready to, yeah, play well here. Yeah, just that I have to go on court and be 100% physically, yeah, just be ready for everything really.

Q. What is the mood like at the top of the women's game at the moment? Caroline Wozniacki is at the top, won the Australian Open. There's a group of six or seven of you up there. Anyone can beat anyone else on any given day. Not like in Serena's time.

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yes, of course it's different. Probably maybe a little bit, like, interesting to see who is going to win big tournaments, Grand Slams.



Definitely for the fans is more interesting. Is different.

I cannot say that it's better, but it's different. I think, of course, Serena is coming back, Maria, Vika is coming back. It's going to be different. Tennis is moving different direction. Now I think we have to get used to it.

Q. What are your Grand Slam ambitions for this year?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Of course, to win a Grand Slam has always been my goal. Is going to be, yeah, for the rest of my career, to win a Grand Slam.

Q. Which one?

ELINA SVITOLINA: All of them (smiling).

Q. What is your best chance?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Chance? What one, you mean?

Q. Yes.

ELINA SVITOLINA: Don't put any pressure on myself.

Q. Would you say you're a clay court player, hard court player? You are an all-court player really.

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, exactly. I won Rome on clay. I won Toronto and here on hard court. I also played well Wimbledon last year. I'm getting better on grass.

We're trying to approach Grand Slams little bit different. So, yeah, this year was quarterfinal. Of course, I wanted more. I wanted to go further. But it's like that.

We do everything what's in our power to be ready.

Q. You mentioned Serena. Do you think she could come back as strong as she was before?

ELINA SVITOLINA: I think maybe not as strong, but different strong. She definitely can come back to level she was. But I'm sure that she will be very, very strong again. I'm not sure it's going to be, like, the same.

For sure, she's a great champion. She has unbelievable experience, unbelievable game for the tennis. Very unique.

It's going to be, yeah, very interesting to see her coming back. Hopefully, you know, I can play against her. I'm going to have a chance to play actually in New

York.

Q. Because Serena, Vika, Maria had long periods out, that created a space for players like you to really move to the top. Has the game changed in the year or so that they've been out?

ELINA SVITOLINA: I think the game changed, but also everyone who is top 10 are quite solid and consistent with their game. That's why it's, like, now kind of equal. Everyone is, yeah, strong and ready to compete each week.

It's like equal, I would say that.

Q. When you played Serena, did you used to get intimidated?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Played against her couple of times. All the time was like different feeling I think because I was trying to do some different things. Sometimes it was not working. Sometimes, you know, I played some great tennis.

With her, it was always very special to play against her, to see what she does. Sometimes, yeah.

Q. Would you be more confident now than you were then because of what you've achieved?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, of course. Confidence is more other parts of me because of the results, because of the matches that I won. It's just, yeah, a part of my game really. That's all the process of winning some tournaments. Brings you confidence that you cannot really lose after. That's the experience.

Q. If you look back 12 months, in what way are you different today, from last year to this year?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Definitely more confident, I would say so. I won lots of tournaments, playing very solid for last year. Of course, there would be bad days, but have to accept them.

The season is quite long. That's why it's tough to be very consistent all the time. I always try to take one step at a time and be ready for each week, do everything what I can that particular day.

Q. Is that the biggest challenge now, to find the consistency which you didn't really have last year?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Last year was pretty consistent. 2017, you mean?

Q. You need consistency more than you've had before. Is that the biggest challenge?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Of course, for each player it's a big challenge because the season is so long. Winning one tournament, you're still not guaranteed, you know, to have a great season. You have to be every week

ready, physically, mentally fresh. That's the main goal, you know, for tennis. You cannot just play one week well and then, you know, play bad. Ranking is not going to go up.

Q. Why Nick Vujicic?

ELINA SVITOLINA: He inspires me. I read lots of books about him. Very inspiring, history. I love reading his thoughts.

Q. Can he help in tennis?

ELINA SVITOLINA: In tennis? Mental part? More lifestyle.

Q. Your parents were sports people. How much did they help you?

ELINA SVITOLINA: They always on my side. They watch matches. Doesn't matter where I'm playing, Australia, during the night. They are, of course, a big part of my career. Especially back in days when I was, like, six, seven years old, making this big decision that I'm going to try to be a professional tennis player. They have this big picture in their mind that's quite risky, as well. Spending lots of money for me to travel. Of course, it's a big part. This was the first step in the direction which gave me this opportunity to have the life I'm having now.

Q. What about Yuri?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, you know, he gave me the opportunity to go to next level. So my parents were the base, I would say. Then, of course, he gave me the opportunity to travel even more, on a bigger tournaments, of course to have some coaches that I couldn't afford.

Of course, you know, he's a big part of my career, as well.

Q. Do you go home? What's the response from people?

ELINA SVITOLINA: I go home very rare. But, like, after this week, I'm going to go to Ukraine for couple of days for some media. To see my family as well. Just like for two days because I don't have enough time to spend there. I obviously have to prepare for Indian Wells, Miami.

Q. What is the response from the people every time you go home?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, it's amazing. When I always meet with the fans, they always telling me they watching my matches during the night. They're supporting me. I actually inspire their kids to go on court, play tennis.

Yeah, they really enjoy watching me. It gives me lots of

positive vibes, I would say.

Q. Do you get recognized in the supermarket?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Yeah, sometimes. Well, I don't go supermarket often in Ukraine, but now it's better because I sign couple more contracts with Ukrainian companies. Now it's even bigger.

Yeah, it's getting bigger and bigger. I'm really happy the way tennis are getting promoted more and more. So yeah.

Q. When you look back now, what is the most difficult part to become a good tennis player for you in your career?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Most difficult part is when you are losing some matches, when you're playing somewhere, I don't know, the countries where like two people are watching, and it's probably your parents. It's quite tough. You don't see much of the light at the end of the tunnel because you don't know what's up there.

Then when you reach probably your first Grand Slam and you see actually how many people are watching, all the fans, actually it motivates you massively. That's what happened to me. It's tough to say on behalf of everyone. For me, it was a big push. I wanted to play on big courts, I wanted to be around top players. That's what really motivated me.

That's very tough when you start with 10,000, 25,000, you don't know what's your goal, what direction you are heading.

Q. What is the longest you've spent back home at one time in the last couple years?

ELINA SVITOLINA: The longest probably was five days. Even though I'm from Odessa, where my parents live now, I was probably four days in Kiev because all the media, all the photo shootings, all this stuff I do in Kiev, where everything based.

That's why, you know, for me it's a bit like I go home but not home in the same time. Those days, I spend training. London, I live there most of the time. When I have free time, I go there.

Q. Where do you train in London?

ELINA SVITOLINA: Chelsea Harbour Club.