

Rothesay International

Thursday, 27 June 2024

Eastbourne, England, UK

Devonshire Park

Leylah Fernandez

Press Conference

L. FERNANDEZ/H. Dart

6-2, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Leylah, congratulations. Into the semifinals here. Doing really well on grass this season. Talk us through your thoughts on the match and how you're feeling.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah, I'm super happy with today's match, the way that I was able to execute my game plan and my game.

You know, it was important for me in the beginning and the get-go to start off strong. It was a little up and down, but, you know, the mentality that I have been working super hard with my team the past couple of months is finally showing, so I'm just happy that the result is coming in.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. I believe it's your first semifinal of the year, but it feels like each week on the tour you have been building, playing great. Do you feel like you're on the edge of maybe something big again and that might be coming here in Eastbourne?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: You know, I hope so, because every month, every day, like, we have been building, and we've just tried to keep working hard, keep looking at the long run and not seeing the results immediately.

So, you know, I think that's what helped me to keep moving forward. I'm just happy that right now the results are showing and that I'm playing good tennis. Hopefully I can keep going and just enjoy my time on court, on grass.

Q. You served great today. I think you won over 80% of the first-service points and over 60% of the second-service points. Is that an area of the game you have been working on? Do you think this week the serve is making the difference?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yes, 100%. I have been working on my serve for a very long time, since forever,

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and we're still working on it. You know, we're always looking to see what can be improved, the precision, the more speed too.

I'm just happy that today I was able to use my serve as a weapon. I think on grass the serve is extremely important. You can kind of take initiative immediately from the serve. The grass is very unpredictable, so sometimes the bounce can go your way and, you know, we've just got to use it.

Q. You and Emma Raducanu are making a deep run in this tournament. How good is it that you're both able to play well, you're healthy on the court, and you're in the latter stages of a tournament again?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Well, I'm not sure how Emma feels, but, you know, I'm just happy with my level of play, with the way that I was able to just showcase the tennis that I have been working hard the past couple of months, past couple of years.

You know, I'm just happy that I'm feeling healthy, that the body is feeling great, that I can keep going and that there is no aches and pains that will stop or hinder me in any way.

Q. On the topic of Emma, you guys hit obviously together before tournament. Was that the first time you guys had hit together since Arthur Ashe Stadium? What was it kind of like? Any deja vu?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Actually yeah, it was our first time hitting since 2021. You know, it was actually funny, because I just arrived, like, a day before our hit, and I was calling practice desk, like, hoping, praying, like, there would be a court available, somebody's that's looking. Thankfully Emma put down looking. It was a perfect time.

We just started hitting, and it was great. It was great seeing her play. We caught up just a little bit. We were all very busy, but it was great hitting with her.

It brought back some good memories. I think it also prepared us for this week (smiling).

Q. I just wanted to go back to your first-round win over Barbora. It was a bit of a crazy match. I think we were a little bit shocked that you guys actually

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got the match in before light fell. What was the key to that win, and do you feel like that has been the springboard to your performances the last two matches?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah, you're not the only one that was shocked that we kept playing. You know, I think I was looking at my box, looking at the referee, and I think I also saw the supervisor there, like, are you going to call it? I hope you don't, because things are going well for me (smiling).

So I think, like, that match was more important mentally to not focus on the external part of everything, because we had a change of courts, change of times. We didn't know when we were going to get on, if it was going to be after the men's match on center court or will it be on Court 1, and then finally they changed us to Court 2.

So it was, like, a very, I wouldn't say hassle, but it was kind of a little bit of a mess in the background. But, you know, we made it work, and the mentality that my team told me to have is to not focus on the outside; just focus on my game on court.

I was just happy that I was able to execute that. I think it did help me to compete in the next few matches, the last two games. After the first round, you know, it always feels good to get through the next round, but I think it also showed me that I was able to kind of prioritize what's important in my head and in my emotions, and that helped me, I think, for the second round and third round to not take mistakes too hard as much (smiling).

Q. Looking ahead, obviously either Madison or Karolina. Can you talk through the challenges of playing two players who have slightly different game styles? What do you think about facing them on grass?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think it will be super tough. I think Madison has won this tournament in the past, so she feels extremely comfortable here on grass.

You know, Karolina, she's coming back from injury and she's playing super well. I saw a little bit of her last match and it was extremely impressive the way she played, played freely.

I think it will just be a battle the next round, and I'll just try to execute the game plan that's been given to me by my coaches and just enjoy the moment. It's my first semifinal of the year, and I think if I can enjoy the moment, that's a win for me.

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