

April 9, 2016



**Elena Vesnina defeats Sara Errani
6-4, 4-6, 6-2
Semifinal Round**

**An interview with:
Elena Vesnina**

Q. Is this one of the better runs you've ever been on in your career, to go from qualifying to a finals?

ELENA VESNINA: Maybe you're right. I think I've never been in the finals coming from the qualifying. So yeah, I have like -- how many matches I won? How many matches I won, two in qualis. Seven. So seven matches in a row. Well, that's quite impressive. Yeah. That's a big run for me.

Q. Having been to the finals here before, did you kind of know that you could make the run, you just had to get back to where you were or is it a surprise that you're on this run?

ELENA VESNINA: I had some great memories from being in that final five or six years ago, and of course, I knew that I can do that again. But of course, I knew that it was going to be very difficult coming from the qualifying. I know that's how many matches ahead of me. So I was not even thinking about the final. I was just thinking match by match, like improve your game on the clay, because just last week it was Miami, hardcourts, so it's not easy to change it that quickly.

And yeah, I'm pretty impressed with my game level, today as well, because Sara, she's a clay court specialist. You know, she had most of her wins on this surface and she really knows how

to play. She really understands the strategy on this surface.

Q. Congratulations. It's been a few years since you've played Sloane. What do you know about her game and how she's playing this week? She's having her best week ever at this tournament as well.

ELENA VESNINA: Sloane is a very talented girl. I always knew that. She's very casual on the court. She's very calm, and she's moving amazingly. She's a really great mover on the court. And it's going to be a very difficult match. We played three years ago, I think in Hobart.

I remember her. I remember what she likes, what she doesn't like, and it's going to be very important tomorrow to stay focused, you know, because Sloane, she's using the pace really good on the court, and her forehand is one of the strongest forehands on the tour. So I need to probably stay away from that shot and keep moving her around. And service is going to be important. I hope it's not going to be that windy like today. Let's hope.

Q. Yeah. I wanted to talk about the conditions. How was it out there? It looked brutal. The wind looked really, really brutal. And how much did that affect your game and the match?

ELENA VESNINA: I'm used to playing with the wind, but the problem is that today it was changing the direction, like every five minutes it was blowing different ways. So a couple of games I lost because I thought that I'm playing -- that the wind is ahead of me, and it was like blowing -- it was blowing not this way, it was blowing at me. So I need a couple of points just to understand that I'm playing the wrong strategy with the wind, because you still need to think about your shots every time when you're going -- especially with Sara, because she's giving me some time. She's giving me some high balls and some low balls. So I always kind of have time before the shot. But with the wind it's tricky because it's always like flying different direction and changing the way. So yeah, for me it was really difficult mentally today as well for me to keep going and keep going for my shots.

Q. I'm sure it's happened very fast, so you haven't had anytime to sit back and look at

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what you've accomplished. How big do you think this is, and big is this match in the span of your career?

ELENA VESNINA: Yeah. It's a big match for me. It's great to be in the final, especially in a great tournament like Charleston. So many great champions were here, playing many years. We have posters in the gym The Players' lounge with like Martina Navratilova, Chris Evert, and you're just looking at them, and you know that this tournament, it means a lot for us.

I'm really happy that I made it through, and I'm in the final, but tomorrow is another match, so I need to get ready, and yeah, I'm really looking forward for the final and hopefully I can win it.

Q. That was a quality match. Both of you all were trading hits back and forth, great placement. I'm just curious, in your experience when you have a high-level match like that, does that carry over to the next match as far as playing at that level again or does that take more out of you and you kind of have to be aware of being up mentally for another match?

ELENA VESNINA: It's going to be a little bit different match tomorrow against Sloane because Sloane is playing in a different style than Sara. So yeah, today we had really good quality tennis, and a lot of amazing rallies, a lot of coming, like I was impressed today about my net game because a couple of shots that I hit coming to the net, they were like, you know, like amazing. Even I thought that it was amazing.

Yeah, it's going to be difficult to show the same level in the final, and in general in the finals it's really difficult to show your best tennis. You need to be solid. You need to be consistent. You need to come on the court and you have to know what you have to do there. Just not like come there and just be like, you know, like you're lost already. So you have to be ready, and yeah, hopefully tomorrow it will be a great match between me and Sloane.

Q. You were Top-25 earlier in your career. Can you explain to us why you're sort of back in qualifying, and have you had injuries to deal with or what's going on there?

ELENA VESNINA: Yeah, I got a serious injury at the US Open in 2014. I injured my shoulder and I knew that I was playing with a serious injury. But me and Ekaterina Makarova we

won that title, and I knew that I was injured and doctors were telling me that it's quite serious. But I didn't care at that moment. I was like, let's win that title.

Yeah, so it took a while for me to recover after that. Even it was not hurting that much after, but I was still not feeling my shoulder like before. And I was struggling with confidence, because I was losing some matches, and it's never helping with your ranking as well. I was losing some points. I was dropping in the ranking. I was not winning matches. And it was really difficult to come up. And I'm really happy that I actually doing well now, and I'm not actually looking at my ranking that much. I'm just looking at my game. That's I think most important thing.

Q. You said earlier, just today, that it's hard to show your best tennis in a final. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

ELENA VESNINA: Yeah, because the final it's a big pressure for both players, and it's only two of you coming in that final after the whole week fighting and surviving. And then this is it. So you have to show your like good tennis, and some players, maybe when they're coming on the final they're trying to show maybe too much, you know, and you don't have to ask from yourself for too much. You have to ask yourself for solid game and solid match. That's the most important. And all about the key moments, all about the key points.

Q. I do remember the last final in 2011 because you won the doubles title that year, too. You kept popping out and saying hello to everybody.

ELENA VESNINA: Right after.

Q. Yeah. Right after. But I do remember something that happened in that final is that you had some problems with your serve whereas previously in the other matches you had just been serving up a storm. I'm wondering if you're doing any special kind of service preparation or how you're factoring that in because it did make a difference.

ELENA VESNINA: Yeah. I was working a lot on my serve in the preseason. And I know that this is a strong part of my game, and I rely on my serve. And on that final against Caroline, she played really great on that final. I give credit to her

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because she was so solid. She didn't make any mistakes on that day. She was like No. 1 in the world I think at that time.

So yeah, it was a really difficult match for me. It was painful to lose in the final. But still, maybe I didn't show good tennis in that final. But Caroline, she made me, you know, play maybe not my good tennis.

So hopefully tomorrow I can step in and I can just show good tennis and I can win it.

End of Interview

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