

April 10, 2016



**Sloane Stephens defeats Elena Vesnina
7-6⁴, 6-2
Final Round**

An Interview With: Elena Vesnina

Q. Elena, because this is your second time in the finals and coming up short, does that wear on you, or because of this year and being able to win seven matches in eight days before today, you're not worried about losing twice in the finals here?

ELENA VESNINA: I mean, yeah, it's just tennis. You know, you can't win everything. Of course, I wanted to win for my second try title here in the Volvo Car Open, and it's an amazing tournament, and I was really, really happy.

It was like pure joy to play on the center court today, and we showed some high-level tennis today with Sloane, and I know that I had chances. I had set point in the first set. But in the other case, Sloane was playing really solid. She was like a little bit better, one step faster, one step better. Like serving with a good percentage of the first serve. She was moving really well. I mean she's one of the best players on the defense, so when she's sliding and getting all those balls, at some point I was just thinking, you know, she's everywhere.

And it was not easy for me, and playing a lot of matches, maybe my body wasn't that, say, fast, like at the beginning of the week, but still, it's not about that. It's just about tennis, and somebody was just a little bit better today. And that's why she won.

Q. She said that she was never complacent and knew that you would fight till the very end, because it's a final and that's what you do.

ELENA VESNINA: Yeah.

Q. So in the second set you shook out your right arm and you started to kind of twist around your hips.

ELENA VESNINA: Yeah.

Q. Were you cramping or feeling the wear and tear from the match or just trying to keep yourself loose?

ELENA VESNINA: No, no, no. I was not feeling cramping. It was just my body was a bit stiff from all these matches, even having massage, our physio doing a really good job here. But all the soft tissues and flushes, still, your body is not kind of recovering that fast.

And I was just doing some movements that I know that it's helping me to relax the muscles, but I was not struggling with anything during the match. I didn't have pain anywhere. Just the end of the match like I had some -- like just at the very end I had some problems with my ankle. Weird problem, but it's not like I lost my match because of that. It's just she was just better today.

Q. Elena, you told us about coming back from the shoulder injury at the Open. And what does this week do for you making the final out of the qualifying tournament? How does that help you going forward?

ELENA VESNINA: I hope it's going to help me because when you're playing in such a big event final coming from the qualifying, it's giving me a lot of confidence, and I hope that I will get confidence.

I feel good on the court. I feel that I can do everything, and like it's not really far away from me my ranking that I had before. And it's just a question about the consistent, if I will play consistently through the whole year like this, having some good wins, good results, going deep in the draw, winning a title, which is always great, and playing finals.

For me actually this final is like a win. I feel a little bit. I know that there's only one winner, and for us, for all the athletes there's only one place, No. 1, but here, today, I feel like I'm a winner. (Laughs). Because I played so many

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matches from qualis. I was just counting, I had like seven matches in singles and two in doubles, so nine matches in one week. That's quite a lot.

So yeah, I'm just really happy about my run here, and yeah, just let's see how it's going to be the rest of the year. But I'm really looking forward to that because I think it's going to be good.

Q. Elena, mentally was it difficult at all to move into the second set after the comeback and playing so tight, having the set point there and even being tied in the tiebreaker at one point. Was it difficult to kind of reset yourself for that second set?

ELENA VESNINA: You know what, Sloane, if she would give me a little chance, I felt it on the court, I would take it. Because I was just -- all these matches that I have, it was really difficult to beat me today.

I know I played against girls who was coming from the qualis having like five or six wins in a row. It's just really tough to beat someone who is like on the roll. And Sloane, she was not giving me that chances.

Even at the beginning of the second set, I mean I'm a fighter, I'm always fighting till the end. And even I lost that first set, I mean it was 7-6, it was really close and I had set point.

So I knew that I needed a little bit more luck and I will be back, you know, I will be back on the court and it's going to be one set all. But she was just solid, better, moving amazingly and defending amazingly.

And then at the same time she was really quick, coming from the defense to offense. She was like coming inside of the court, playing with the super angle shots. So it was just really difficult for me today, and I felt that I lost to a player who can be back in Top 10 this year. I really think like that because Sloane, she has the potential for that.

Q. Yesterday you talked about your injury in 2014 and just how kind of low you've gotten. Now you're seeing how well you're playing. Do you really feel like this is the best you've played professionally?

ELENA VESNINA: I don't know. That's a good question. I had a lot of matches under my belt from the past. It's just different story now. It's just different part of my life. Like everybody would think that it's kind of end of my career, almost the

end, like I'm getting close to 30, you know, because I'm always hearing these talks, oh, my God, there's so many players who is like after 30 they start playing well. I feel like I'm still 21 or something.

So yeah, coming after injury, it's a different part of my life. Like my career start over. And maybe I'm playing better because I'm more -- what's the word for that? Mature. Yeah. Thank you. I'm a more mature player. And during the match I'm start to be a little bit more calm. I'm not asking for myself for like some best tennis, best results. I know what I can do. I know what I'm good for. I'm playing good. I'm moving well. And the most important is to be healthy.

So if all this kind of things comes together, I know that I can do well and I can play better and better every week. So it's just everything, because I had good last week in Miami. I had really good week in Doha, so all these kind of matches pulled together, I have this consistent, I have this confidence inside probably, because the woman psychologist, it's quite funny, you know, for us, like we're losing one match and the confidence is like way down, you know, so -- not like guys.

Yeah, so now hopefully I will have a lot of confidence coming for European clay season.

Q. What's next for you? Do you fly out of Charleston tonight?

ELENA VESNINA: Tomorrow. I will enjoy Charleston for tonight. I'll go for -- have some dinner downtown with my friends. Finally I have a chance to go to downtown because I was playing every day. And I was finishing so late, so I was having dinner on Daniel island, and then next week it's going to be Fed Cup.

Q. The look of shock on Sloane's face when the car came out, what did you think and did that add to your disappointment at all?

ELENA VESNINA: You know what, no. I was just shocked as well, and I was really happy for her. She's such an amazing girl, such a good kid, and we are good friends with her. And of course, I mean I think we had the same face impression at that time. We were like -- like this.

And I told Bob that I was like, if you would tell me before the final that there is a car, you know, maybe it would be different result. But he was like we need to keep it a secret. We're trying to keep it a secret.

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End of Interview

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