

April 3, 2019

**J. OSTAPENKO defeats S. Rogers
4-6, 6-3, 7-6
Second Round**

An Interview With:

JELENA OSTAPENKO

Q. You were living on the edge this afternoon. Can you say what went through your mind at 1-5 in the third?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean I was just trying to fight until the last point, and I knew like tennis is the game where everything can turn the other way, so I was just trying to fight until the last point.

Q. Was there a moment at all in the match when you felt like you couldn't fight?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: No, not really. I always knew like first of all first set I didn't play that well, and she was playing really well. She was hitting strong. And then I kind of got used to the game, and I think the key game was the first one in the third set, which I had the opportunities to win and I missed one shot down the line, and everything kind of went her way. And, yeah, then I was just happy that I fought and could find my game.

Q. Is there ever a moment when you're in those situations and you're down in the score line by a lot, which we've seen before, and you've come and reeled off five straight games, six straight games where you're just thinking I'm just going to hit the ball and if it goes out, it goes out and I go home, or if it lands, then it lands and I win the match. Just give us some insight into kind of what you're thinking at that time.

JELENA OSTAPENKO: Honestly, no, today I was not trying to hit it as strong as possible. I was trying to make the rallies longer. So I felt it was more effective for me, the longer the rally was,



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the more possibility it was for me to win it. And when I had good rally, just tried to play aggressive.

Q. Do you feel like that has been a big kind of improvement or a big step in your game, this idea of lengthening rallies, of playing through rallies a little bit more as opposed to maybe obviously three or four years ago where we kind of knew you more as a bang-bang player?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, of course, I still have to go to attack. Otherwise it most probably will not bring me the results that I did. But, of course, I don't have to rush with the points. I just have to go from the comfort of a ball, like to change down the line or to hit winner. But most of the time I realize that when the rallies are long, most of them I win.

Q. And in January you were saying that you knew that when you started the season, that you were maybe undercooked a little bit as we say. You didn't have the practice. So now, three months later, where do you -- can you reassess your game compared to January? Where are you feeling it right now?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean, of course, I'm much better now, but still I have of course more confidence than before, but I feel like I can still be much better player than I am now. But I'm working on it and I started to practice much more already, because as I said, before with this injury it took me so long, so I couldn't really do the proper preseason. So I'm trying now to compensate it and, yeah, just trying to get back in form, and I just love to play on clay.

Q. After winning a French Open at such a young age, what do you take away or what do you bring into a match that reminds you of that moment to keep going, that you could get to that level again?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I think the most important is to be just fearless like I was there. I

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was just not trying to miss the ball and I was just going for it. And I didn't think too much, because after everything changed so much, and I'm thinking much more like during the points. Also I'm trying to get rid of it and just try to be fearless and play again the way I played there.

Q. What are your plans for the clay season when you leave here?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: Yeah, I'm going to play Bogota. Then I'm going to have a Fed Cup, but back on hard court. Then I'm going to play Stuttgart, Madrid, Rome and French Open probably. Or maybe some smaller ones. We'll see.

Q. Are you surprised by how difficult it has been to play fearless since winning the French Open?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: Yeah. Actually, I have realized that it's like once you don't have -- like not don't have it anymore, but once you start to think too much, it's very hard to get rid of it, and it's hard to get that feeling, like fearless feeling again, because I'm in a different position right now, like ranking wise and also a Grand Slam champion. And, yeah, like people, as I said, expect more from me. But I think now I deal with this pressure already enough, so now it's much better than it was.

Q. So when you talk about playing fearlessly, like what is the thing that you are scared of? What is the thing that stops you from being able to play fearlessly?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I don't know. It's difficult question, but sometimes just the thoughts, like when you go to the match if you are the favorite of the match and you have this in your mind sometimes that you kind of cannot lose the match, but you understand that the other player is playing good as well, and it makes you more pressure, you want to try to play much better. But you play worse because you have this thinking that you have to win. But now I'm just trying to go on the court without thinking that I have to win. Just try to enjoy it.

Q. Seems like you and a couple other women here at the tournament are playing with a new Wilson racquet or just a different paint of some sort. Can you describe what's going on with them or is it just a new design coming out?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: It's a limited edition racquet. It's a Blade, I don't know. I call it zebra. But I don't know how to call it. It's a great racquet. I honestly love it, because Wilson makes sometimes some limited edition racquets and most of the time they choose me to play with them, with those racquets, because they know I like something limited. (Laughs). I mean something that not everyone is using, like limited edition, yeah. And honestly, I like this racquet so much, but first couple of days I had to get used to the colors because it's much brighter than the other ones.

Q. What's it like kind of going back to just being you and your mom, like that she's kind of back being the coach and advising you and things like that? How different is that? And does it almost help you maybe not have to deal with as much pressure not having somebody constantly on you in a way that kind of a typical head coach might be?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I think, honestly, it's one of the best options for me to work with my mom. Of course, there can be some like coach that can help me also, but I think with my mom I feel much more comfortable than with any other coach because other people are different and the personalities are also different. And it's very hard to find the right person and the person who is going to have the same personality as my mom. And, yeah, I mean I just -- it's great to have her here.

Q. I think a lot of the players when they coach with their parents, there's a very fine line where they become a coach versus a parent. Has your mom ever crossed the line or have you ever experienced where your coach and mom relationship has mixed?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I mean it's very hard to like think that she's coach on the court and mom in life. It's always like mixing up, because

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sometimes she's giving me some exercise and I understand that she's more mom, and I can say, oh, this is not right. But I understand that it's right. But I just want to, I don't know, say something because I mean, like she's my mom. And it's also sometimes difficult that we spend like almost all the time together. I mean I enjoy so much to spend time with her, but sometimes you just need like some little breaks because you also have some arguments that with like no reason, because you just spent too much time. It's normal, I think all the people have this.

Q. Are you dancing lately?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I was dancing when I was back home, but not too much because I didn't have that much time, but I still keep doing it, yes.

Q. Does that help you with your fearlessness?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: Dancing?

Q. I think it might.

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I don't know. It depends. Like I had actually, like I think the year before, I was like making an exhibition with like a dancing partner, and I was so much stressed. I think I was never stressed that much on the tennis court when I went out there because it's all different people.

Q. We watch you on YouTube, you know.

JELENA OSTAPENKO: Yeah, I was like so stressed, and it's good that I didn't forget the steps that I had to make because I was so stressed. Like never in my life I was that stressed as I was there.

Q. You see, it does help you. When you get on tennis court, it's no big deal.

JELENA OSTAPENKO: Yeah, like when I am back on tennis court, I'm like, oh, this is nothing compared to the pressure that I had there.

Q. Very serious question. Have you seen any of Aga Radwanska's dancing videos? She's on like the Polish "Strictly Dancing."

JELENA OSTAPENKO: Oh, no. I haven't seen. I just saw, I think, Andrea Hlavackova. She was dancing something, I think, similar to the dancing I'm doing as well, like ballroom dancing. I saw some of her videos.

Q. And more serious question. Do you plan on just kind of working with your mom through the clay season? Are you actively looking for anyone else or is it just you're fine with the way that it is right now?

JELENA OSTAPENKO: I'm honestly fine with the way it is now. I think my mom knows me the best, and she wants everything, like all the best to me. And she knows me since I was born. And I think she's the one who can help me the most, because I have to feel comfortable with the person I'm working, and with her I do feel comfortable.

End of Interview

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