

# BNP Paribas Open

Thursday, March 16, 2017

## Elena Vesnina

Press Conference

E. VESNINA/V. Williams

6-2, 4-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. You said you were on fire. What's happening?**

ELENA VESNINA : Yeah, I'm in the semifinal of BNP Indian Wells tournament, one of the biggest Masters Series tournament. I guess I'm on fire. I'm enjoying myself on the court, and I'm really happy with my wins here.

This win today against Venus really means a lot for me. It's never easy to play against her. She's a great champion and always fighting till the end.

I'm really happy that I pulled this win.

**Q. How tough mentally is it? She was producing some tough and amazing shots, other shots when she was dipping.**

ELENA VESNINA : You're right. In the first set, it was a little bit unexpected. You know, when I was up 3-Love in the first set, she was missing some easy shots. She looked tired and slow on the court. Then, all of a sudden, she started moving around, hitting great shots, winners from all over the place.

And in this momentum, I kind of lost my rhythm, because I didn't know what to expect. I played against Venus, I don't know, four times. It kind of -- I kind of knew the way she's playing, hitting, serving, and today was totally different story. Today she was playing totally different tactic match.

Yeah, so it was not easy. When she won the second set, I was, like, I saw previous matches that she was down with match point with a set point, and I was like, Uh-Oh, it's coming back again. I'm going to be another victim of Venus. I don't want. I want to win this. I want this match.

**Q. Talk us through that last game, though.**

ELENA VESNINA : I was actually very proud of myself, how I held my nerve.

I was Love-40 down, but, like, I didn't even think about that it's love-40. It was point by point, trying to create a



good rally, trying to move her around.

It was difficult a little bit for me. I was struggling with the first-serve percentage in the end of the third set, so it was really important with me. I start serving with a little bit less power, and a bit more pace.

Couple of kind of big points she gave me unforced error, and I stick to this game. You know, I was, like, I never gonna lose this game. I was really fighting like it's the last game of my life.

Yeah, maybe this kind of tactic helped me, you know, to win this last game. Because other way it's gonna be 5-4, she will serve and then 5-All, and you never know. She will come back again.

**Q. You looked like you had endless energy out there. How are you feeling right now having played so much tennis?**

ELENA VESNINA : I feel great, you know. We play at night, you know, it wasn't that hot, you know. It was actually perfect conditions.

Yeah, it was -- I'm a little bit tired. Of course, it was not an easy match, especially mentally. Because when you're set up and then down with a break, it's never easy coming back again, you know.

But I'm happy. You know, I have doubles coming in few hours. So, yeah, I need to win this match, and then tomorrow I will be ready for the semifinal. I know how to recover. You know, I'm not the new player on the tour. I know that I need to recover, like, recover right and fast for that.

**Q. In that semifinal, Mladenovic, what are your thoughts there?**

ELENA VESNINA : Kiki is having a great season. She's on fire. She won her first maiden title in St. Petersburg and then she made final in Acapulco. I think now she beat two top 10 players on the way to the semifinal.

So definitely she's having a great season. It's going to be tough match. She's upcoming player. We played couple of times, but two, three years ago, and totally different story now.

So we will see. I need to think how I need to play against her, because I have couple of thoughts on my mind. She's a great doubles player, as well. You know, so she's kind of player on all the court, you know. She can come into the net. She's using the dropshots, slices.

So it's going to be difficult match, but on the other hand, it's very exciting to play the semifinal match here in Indian Wells.

**Q. Talking about maturity, you talked about it earlier in this tournament. How does that come into play when you're trying to close out a match like that? Things start to get a little bit tense.**

ELENA VESNINA : I think you're getting this kind of feel with experience. With Venus, I had couple of matches already like this. Wimbledon, when I beat her first time, it was kind of the same situation, you know. I was serving 5-4, and then she was already playing better and better, and I just went for it.

You know, you have to be kind of brave on this moment. You have to be confident. Don't let you go down. I was telling to myself, even when I was 5-2 up, I had three match points, but she played amazing on those three match points. She didn't give it to me, and I knew I had to take it from her.

If you're not confident, if you're going down with your head, it's never going to help you. I was always trying to tell myself that nothing bad happened. You're still on the serve, even if it's Love-40 down. One point, then another point, and it will come.

But that's the experience, I guess.

**Q. You played Venus many times. You have been on the tour for a little while. Just talk about her impact from an international perspective. Just talk about that.**

ELENA VESNINA : She's a great example of how you can love tennis. You know, for so many years, she brings so much passion and love to this game.

She's coming and giving everything, you know. She's always fighting, always enjoying, smiling. You know, you can see she's, like, little girl on the court, actually, enjoying more than half of the WTA Tour. And we have to learn from her, you know, how she's appreciating what she's doing.

I think maybe it came to her maybe kind of few years ago. Maybe when she was young she was a bit different, but now she's totally enjoying herself and she's, like, inspiring everybody around her, you know, her and Serena, as well. Because really what they

bring to the tennis, to the woman's tennis, is just amazing.

**Q. Are you playing to age 36 too?**

ELENA VESNINA : Me? Hopefully not (smiling). I don't know. It's just -- I didn't think about that. But when I was, I think, 26, everybody start calling me veteran on the tour. I was, like, Oh, okay. So should I stop already in few years?

I didn't think about that. You have to be healthy to be in great shape to compete in such a high level like Serena and Venus. You know, Serena No. 1, 2 in the world, Venus close to the top 10. They are really on very, very high, high level for all their tennis life, I think. I think that's why they keep playing.

I don't know if I can do that in my career. I'm trying to crack first top 10 in my life after 30. I don't know. We'll see.

**Q. Do you and Sveta ever talk about how much fun it is, like, right now for both of you, kind of, you know, after 30 and, you know, long storied careers?**

ELENA VESNINA : Yes, I spoke with Sveta couple years ago, and she told me that at that time two years ago she started working even harder than she was working, let's say, five, seven years ago, but she was working with a smile on her face.

I was asking her, Sveta, are you okay? You're working six hours a day and you're still smiling and enjoying. She's, like, I'm really enjoying what I'm doing. I love tennis and just now I realize how lucky I am that I have this life.

I think that's why she's having this great season. You know, after 30, gets back into the top 10 and in semifinal of Indian Wells. Last year she played final in Miami.

She's inspiring. She's a great player, and I think we have kind of the same momentum in our life and our career. Yeah, we are definitely -- both of us in the semifinals, so this is great for Russian tennis.

**Q. You have spent a fair amount of time here in our country. What do you love the most about this country, and what don't you love the most about it?**

ELENA VESNINA : I always love coming back here to the States. I love California. It's a beautiful place here. So much sun, you know, after coming back from Moscow where there is not much sun in March.

So it's great, like, nice weather all the time. People are smiling and always -- what I like about States, how you guys love sport. You know, you have so many sports

channels on the TV. It's amazing, you know. There is college basketball, college baseball, woman basketball, college, men's -- everything. On the TV, Tennis Channel. I'm enjoying watching so much sport.

In Russia, we don't have it. We have one sports channel and basically showing only football. That's all. No tennis at all.

I think that's great that in the States you really kind of appreciate what the sports, the athlete doing, you know. You are really cheering for your athlete and very, like, kind of welcoming everybody who is coming to your country and playing and winning here. It's just great.

What I don't like, I'm not gonna say. (Laughter.) I like everything so far.