

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

Leylah Fernandez

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Give us your thoughts about playing here in Miami.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I'm very, very excited to be playing here in Miami at the Miami Open. It's my first time in the main draw. I played here last year at the qualifying, which did not go too well, but I learned a lot.

I'm super happy to be here, to be in a nice environment, to play a tournament that I've always watched on TV, to play in front of the Miami crowd.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Have you noticed any difference playing in the United States since when you got to the finals in the US Open? Do you have more people recognizing you?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think we have more fans watching tennis. I think that's the difference. You see more of a bigger crowd watching women's tennis, watching our matches, not only my matches but other players, too. They're more interested and they're more involved.

I think that's what's important. That is what has improved since the US Open. I'm loving every minute of it. I'm loving the positivity that all the players are getting from the fans.

Q. What is your favorite court in the world, favorite tournament maybe?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: That's a very hard question because I have a lot of favorite tournaments. All tournaments are my favorite because you get different surfaces, different environments, different feeling, different vibes. I'm super, super happy to be here because this will be my first time in a main draw at the Miami Open.

I think after playing this year, I can answer you that question because there will be a lot of firsts for me. We'll see at the end of the year.

Q. In the current environment with so many distractions, do you have any advice or learned

lessons you took from when you started training when you were little?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think the best advice and the best experience that has happened to me was to be surrounded by people who have the best interest for myself. They have the same goals. I was surrounded by my family for a very, very long time. Little by little we expanded our team by some coaches, by some fitness trainers, by a great group of agents. That's what has helped me.

We all have the same goals. I think that's the most important because they only want the good and the well-being of the athlete, of me, not only physically but mentally and emotionally. That would be my best advice to give to the players, to the coaches, to surround yourself by good people.

Q. (No microphone.)

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think the best advice I can give them is to have fun and to always put a good environment for them so that they can smile and enjoy tennis, then they can go back home and want to play more.

Q. Can you tell us coming from Indian Wells which are the biggest difference you see?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think the biggest difference would be the humidity. You sweat a lot more here in Miami comparatively speaking than in Indian Wells.

I've trained in Miami for a very long time now. I'm used to the heat here. I'm very happy to be back home, to play in this tournament. I think it will be a good tournament. To be able to adapt from one tournament to another will be key. We'll see how I'm able to manage that.

Q. (No microphone.)

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: We will see. I like Miami a lot. I've trained here for a few years. I would say Miami would be advantageous for me. I will not promise anything. I will not say anything other than that.



Q. An obvious question. You've probably heard about Ashleigh. What do you think about it? How do you feel about someone retiring at 25?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Well, you know, first of all it was very unexpected and surprising. Ashleigh, she's an amazing player on and off the court. We are very sad to see her retire because tennis, the WTA, the tennis world, we need her. She's a great athlete. She brings excitement to the crowd on her matches.

To see her retire like this so suddenly is a little sad. But I hope that she's happy and I hope that she's happy on her next step in her life. Hopefully one day, maybe if she wants to, she can come back. A know a lot of the players and tennis fans will be happy.

Other than that I think I'm just happy for everything that she's accomplished, and the great role model she is to not only the players but also to the next generation. I see how she works. I see how professional she is. I know what is my next step, what I need to do to hopefully achieve what she has done.

Q. Up at the Florida Panthers training camp, a couple of the Panthers players say they want to support a lot of the Canadian players. Have you seen hockey or heard of the Florida Panthers and some of the great players that hopefully will watch your matches?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: First, honestly, I am not a very big hockey fan. I do watch some games. Especially when I was back in Canada, I would watch the games, especially the Montreal Canadiens. My mom is a big Toronto Maple Leafs fan because she is from Toronto. My dad was Montreal Canadiens. It was a very funny dynamic when we watched hockey.

Recently we haven't been able to watch a lot of matches. Just hearing that the Florida Panthers, especially some players, are cheering some Canadians warms my heart because I think it's good that a lot of sports from different categories, men and women, are able to kind of connect in a way that we work hard, we sacrificed a lot, we're just enjoying the competition, we just want the best for each other.

I hope that one of these days I can meet them and thank them in person. I do know one hockey player that my dad has kind of taught me and kind of educated me, would be Wayne Gretzky. I do know a few others, but I would not be able to tell you their stats or anything specific.

Hockey is a great sport. Hopefully, like I said, one day we can meet up and I can thank them for everything that

they've done.

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