



WTA 500

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Leylah Fernandez def. Polina Kudermetova
6-2, 6-1
Round of 32

An Interview With Leylah Fernandez

THE MODERATOR: Leylah, congratulations. That score line was pretty impressive. Just your thoughts on your first match for the week.

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah. The first match was definitely good. I was just very happy with the way that I stayed tough in the first set. She's a very good player, hits the ball very hard, and you don't really see that she gets frustrated. So I don't know what she's thinking or what she's going to do. So it's good that I stayed tough, followed my game plan and get the first win here in Charleston.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Congratulations, Leylah. Jesse was in here talking about how she uses this tournament to kind of figure out how she wants to approach her clay court season, like what shots she wants to employ and everything. How do you think about this tournament in terms of the start of a new period in the tennis calendar? Like are you figuring things out what you want to do on clay or are you just like, whatever, I'm playing, doesn't matter?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I think, like it's not more like figuring out what shots that I need to play on clay court, but more like, okay, this is a new tournament, let's turn the page and forget about the hard court, and now I just got another 75 percent of the season left. So let's just go out there and enjoy. And I think that's kind of been the key phrase the past week and a half training on clay, enjoy out there and be creative.

Q. In addition to you being a champion tennis player, you kind of have the reputation of having one of the best fashion games on tour. I know you have been with Lululemon since 2022. Can you speak about your relationship with Lululemon as they extend their region to tennis and also how you all collaborate with outfits? Basically your involvement in creating some of your kits?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah. Well, that's actually pretty cool that people consider me in that manner. But, yeah, I've been with Lululemon since 2022. The collaboration has been great. They're a great partner. They always ask for my input in the outfits for the upcoming seasons, which colors that I like and what I think we should do better for the tennis line.

I mean, we have a lot of great outfits. There is definitely some of my favorites from last year and the years before with like the crop top skirts and then also some of the dresses. But each year when the season is about to start, a couple months earlier, we would have a little meeting to see what we could implement into the outfits.

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Kelly A. McKee
Savannah Court Reporting, Inc.
Savannah, GA 31410
kadmcr@yahoo.com
912-441-0821



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Q. And I just wanted to ask about the experience of playing doubles with Venus again, Miami, hadn't played together since the US Open, how that came together again and what it was like to be back on the court with her?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah. With Venus we kind of kept in contact after the US Open. We were hoping to play -- well, she asked me to play in Australia, but unfortunately I was already committed with Timea, so that was it.

And then I did ask if she was going to the Middle East, but she wasn't. So we were kind of figuring out the perfect time to play together, and Indian Wells and Miami was the two tournaments where we could play, and unfortunately, Indian Wells didn't happen, but there was Miami Open, and it was a lot of fun.

She's a great mentor. I mean, in the last tiebreak, the third set tiebreaker, we were up and we lost it, and I remember I had like a couple of easy shots, easy volleys, and I missed, and I was really heartbroken at the end of the match because I was like really wanted to end the day with a win. And she told me, you know, like I played great, just to keep going, keep forward. If we all had a time machine, we would use it, but we don't, so just keep moving forward.

So with that quote, that definitely helped me to kind of recharge and look at the bright side and just keep working the next day and find ways to improve.

Q. I know Timea was a great doubles player. How tough was it to say no to Venus Williams, though?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah. There's no disrespect to Timea. She's an amazing doubles player. She's had an amazing career. But it was so hard to say no to Venus because, again, she has like that big sister energy. I never want to disappoint my siblings, and saying no to them is so hard. And when her coach messaged me, I was like, oh, no! It's two days too late! I couldn't do it. But they understood and, again, we still kept in contact. We tried to find the perfect moment to play together.

Q. And just like threw out the phone and be like, sure. You just mentioned that the goal is to be creative this week. Why is that kind of what you want to have?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Well, I mean, clay court is a gritty, slow, very dirty court. I mean, you're sliding everywhere. You get clay into your shoes. You get clay like all over your back, and sometimes I find some in my hair.

And because like all of that, like -- and the court is slowed, I feel like there's more opportunities for slices, for drop shots. And also because you get to slide more. So I feel like that's a little bit fun, like you get to -- you don't get to do that on hard court as much, or at least I don't. I don't know how other players slide on hard court, but when they do, I'm very impressed.

I feel like clay court is just an opportunity where you can a little bit show off a little bit more.

Q. You're someone who has sort of shared the behind the scenes of your world a lot. Like you have videos on Instagram. I think you also have a YouTube channel. I don't know if that's still going. But I wanted to talk a little bit about like a lot of players now have some of their own music shows, documentaries and all of that. Is that something you're still interested in continuing and sharing the behind the scenes of your world? And how important do you think that is, not only for you as a player, but for fans to understand who you are as an athlete?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Yeah, definitely it is something that I would love to continue. At the moment we're still trying to figure out which direction we want to go to, like what do you want to show, what we don't want to show, but also like what do the fans want to see.

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Savannah Court Reporting, Inc.
Savannah, GA 31410
kadmcr@yahoo.com
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I mean, sometimes like we show something, and there's not much traction with that than other days. So we're trying to figure that out.

There's definitely a plan brewing in the team, within the team to showcase a little bit more, not only of my personality, but everyone else's personality. I feel sometimes there's a lot of maybe say negative comments about the team, especially when my results aren't coming in. And I feel like sometimes it's just trying to make them understand that it is a team effort. Sometimes it is my fault. Other times like, you know, it just wasn't our day, and even then it could be the opponent just played way better than I did.

So it's just something that I want to like showcase to the fans, to the world that I do have a great team with me and showcase their personalities, not only mine, and kind of show them that we are also kind of not just professional athlete that gets to travel all over the world, but we also get to enjoy the small things.

Like I enjoy watching TV in my room after a long day. Other times I enjoy a good burger. So like I like to show that to them, and I try to relate with them as much as possible and find a way to motivate a young girl or boy to just keep going on their journey.

End of Interview

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kadmcr@yahoo.com
912-441-0821