

Rybakina teaches teenager harsh lesson at Australian Open

AFP – Former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina dished out a harsh tennis lesson to teenager Emerson Jones on Tuesday, racing into the Australian Open second round 6-1, 6-1.

The sixth seed from Kazakhstan demonstrated her pedigree as she manoeuvred the 16-year-old world junior number one from Australia to all parts of Margaret Court Arena.

Rybakina served 11 aces and lashed 26 winners as she took just 53 minutes to bring the youngster's first Grand Slam appearance to an abrupt end.

"She has a great future and many more years on tour, but I am pretty happy with my performance," said Rybakina, who lost in the final to Aryna Sabalenka two years ago.

Jones, who studies at the National Tennis Academy in Queensland, is highly rated in Australia and tipped to follow in the footsteps of former Melbourne Park champion Ash Barty.

At 5-1 down, she showed a glimpse of her talent when she engineered three break points, only for Rybakina to fire down four consecutive aces and a forehand winner to bully her way to the first set.

Rybakina admitted that she had had to do her homework on Jones.

"I watched a bit her matches," she said. "It took me a couple of games to get used to how she hits the ball."

Rybakina courted controversy before the tournament when she wanted to bring former coach Stefano Vukov back into her team for the first Grand Slam of the year.

The Croat, who helped Rybakina win Wimbledon in 2022, is under a provisional WTA suspension having been accused of using harsh and abusive behaviour towards players.

He denies any wrongdoing and Rybakina said Vukov had never mistreated her.

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