

Mubadala Citi DC Open

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Washington D.C.

Victoria Azarenka

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: How does it feel to be back in D.C.? Have you done anything fun or anything around town?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: It's good to be back. Good to see women's event being upgraded and making it bigger. So that's, I think that's an exciting news for us.

Love the city. I feel like it's a very cool landscape, great architecture, lots of things to do.

My son is here with me, so he's going to join the Washington Capitols for his hockey camp, which is exciting.

Yeah, it's going to be, sounds like it's going to be a nice trip.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Welcome back to Washington I wanted to ask you, you're among the older players here in Washington this week.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Experienced. Let's change that (smiling).

Q. Do you have a different appreciation for the sport of tennis, especially now that you have a son and as you have distanced yourself a little bit from being a top-ranked player and your early Australian Open titles?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Do I have a better appreciation for tennis than when I was younger? I think when I was younger I was a bit more self-focused. Self-centered sounds kind of narcissistic, but I would say more self-focused, and I do feel with the years of experience and kind of my ambition for making the place of work a better place and kind of push and drawing also inspiration from Billie Jean King and Venus Williams that fought hard for equal prize money, that's something that inspires me and motivates me to keep going.

I obviously have still ambitions and dreams for my own

game, but I also do feel that I take a lot on off-court work. It fulfills me. I feel that when you help create maybe a little bit of change or makes somebody else's life better, for me it's more rewarding than you do something for yourself. When I look back at my career, I don't usually look at titles and I don't look at, you know, matches I win as much as I look at things that hopefully helped other people.

Q. This is typically one of the hotter weeks in the city, and I know a lot of players come here to get used to the heat and humidity. What do you do differently about your routine when it's this kind of weather?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I mean, there is not much of a secret here, you know. Just trying to hydrate a little bit more. Anticipate maybe some of the times not to practice at such a hot weather where you're definitely going to be exposed more in matches. But, you know, it's still, you know, I guess preserve a little bit yourself.

A lot of sunscreen, I guess. The sun is really, really hot. But I think the combination of, you know, kind of a lot of AC in and hot weather is something that when you come from Europe is a bit of a shock, so I got sick a little bit I think (smiling).

You know, I practice in Florida, so I'm kind of used to a little bit of the heat and the hot weather, but it is what it is. You just take it the best as you can. Hopefully the umpires will be a bit more gracious with time limits between points (smiling).

Yeah, but we'll see. It's always a challenge. I think some of weeks like Cincinnati can be brutal, as well. It's part of our sport, so we are kind of used to it. We kind of train for it.

Q. Obviously we are back into the hard court season, US Open swing. How are you feeling mentally and physically on these hard courts here in D.C. and just in general?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I really always love playing US Open Series and playing on hard courts. I'm glad that we are building tournaments, you know, like D.C. and making



it bigger. And Canada tournaments always are really fun.

There is a lot of competition. Obviously there is a lot of great matchups that you can test yourself before the Open.

The quality of women's game is really, really high. You can see the cutoff of a 500 is, what, 39 in the world, which is, you know, pretty incredible.

So I feel like the quality that women's game delivers is pretty outstanding. So it's exciting, and it's tough, you know. Right from the first round, it's great matchups, exciting matches. Yeah, looking forward to it.

Q. A little bit of a non-tennis question. Before you arrived here, you got to see one of Lionel Messi's matches with Inter Miami, in South Florida. I'm curious, following him and PSG for a long time, the difference in the atmospheres from seeing him play in Paris to seeing him play in Miami.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: You know, I was quite surprised at the level, and not to say that it's a lower group, but, you know, compared to European football, it's still a little bit of a lower level, but the level was really cool. The atmosphere with the Latin music was crazy. They were like, putting the fires and stuff.

I love that. I wish that we had the kind of similar sometimes atmosphere in tennis. Maybe not right behind where players are serving but on the sides, you know, on top. It would be so fun, so exciting, people singing songs.

I had a big privilege being very, very close to the pitch, so I could almost feel like I'm on the field. I was very lucky with that and very grateful. So it was really fun. I definitely want to go see more games.

Not ready, I don't know if I'm ready to meet Messi yet. We'll see. I might actually cry. Like, I'm not a fan -- not that I'm not -- I am a fan of a lot of people, but I don't really get starstruck, but yeah, I don't know. I might cry. I definitely will probably cry.

Q. If I can ask one more about one of the main matches on stadium here tomorrow against Elina Svitolina, what you have seen in her play recently and how she's played at Wimbledon, any comments, how her game has been clicking so far?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I mean, I said that in Wimbledon. Definitely feels like she's playing free. You know, she's just coming back. So there is nothing to defend, only things to gain. In one way, I would say it's an advantage, but it depends how you look at it.

I feel that it is definitely helping her to play more freely. She's been playing well. Definitely the results are there. I'm looking forward to, you know, to a challenge, for sure. Yeah, it's going to be a different match, different surface, different city. Quite a few things different.

Yeah, it's going to be a battle. It always is.

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