

Mubadala Citi DC Open

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Washington D.C.

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I think this is your first time in D.C. since about 2017.

ARYNA SABALENKA: So I was right. How many years? How many years ago? Like seven? I thought last time I was here with nine years ago. But okay, whatever. I was wrong then.

Q. A long time ago. A lot's happened in your career since then.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah.

Q. What was part of the thought process for you to come back this year?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, first of all it's really nice to be back. It seems like nothing really changed since 2017. Very beautiful place. Great fans. Yeah, happy to be here.

Yeah, my career changed a lot since that time. I'm here because I got injured at Wimbledon, and I haven't played for a while. I felt like I need to build my confidence back and build my level back before going to the US Open.

So I need to play some matches, and that's why I'm here.

Q. I wanted to ask about Wimbledon and the injury. It was a last-minute decision you made to not play. What was the final reason? What's the recovery been like since that injury?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, yeah, that was a very tough decision because I never pull out from the tournament because of the injury. Even if I was injured, I was still playing. I was still struggling, but being able to play. It was my first experience like that. It was very tough.

But I decided to take care of my health, to do a proper rehab, get back stronger. So the recovery was, yeah, very tough one because for two weeks I was doing rehab, like a lot of exercises, a lot of treatments, a lot of recovery stuff.

It felt like a lot, like the whole day I've been doing, like, exercises. It feel like it's actually time to switch off, but you're still working out, still doing something. It was very tough.

Then I start practicing, like slowly getting back. So far I'm doing well. Hopefully this injury will never bother me again and I'll be able to play the next Grand Slam, which is my favorite one. I really want to do well there.

Q. It was about mid July when you got back on the court, two weeks after the start of Wimbledon?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Actually I didn't play for a week and a half doing treatments. I was doing treatment and slowly started doing fitness. I was back on court, I don't know the date, like a week and a half after I left Wimbledon.

Q. Was there any chance you weren't going to make it here? When did you know you were going to be okay for the start of the hard court season?

ARYNA SABALENKA: When was what? When I felt like I recovered?

Q. Yes.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I think actually after week and a half of doing proper treatment and not playing, not pushing myself on serving. After week and a half, when I start practicing, I felt like, Okay, I feel like I'm getting there. Probably after two weeks and a half, I felt like I'm fully recovered and ready to go.

Q. An opponent in Madrid, Robin Montgomery. That was the first time you would have played her. What stood out about her game and the potential there?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Who did I play?

Q. Robin Montgomery.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I played against her?



Q. In Madrid.

ARYNA SABALENKA: It's quite hot, so my brain stop working for a while.

Yeah, it was actually great match. She played really well. She played really great tennis. Not like I was surprised, but I was impressed by the level. It was very tough match and a great match.

Yeah, she'll definitely be a great player.

Q. You mentioned the heat in D.C. How are you preparing for that? When you're preparing for the hard court swing in North America, is it a different preparation than when you're preparing for the hard court swing in Australia?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I was in Florida, so I was practicing in a very tough conditions before going here. It was very humid, very hot.

Here is actually feels much, much easier to breathe, easier to practice. I feel like physically I'm well-prepared after Florida.

But, yeah, comparing the Australian Open swing and the US Open swing, it's two different weather, but tough. Tough weather. In a different way, I would say. I would say Australia is more dry, it's like burning you stronger. Here is more humid, I would say less hot. It's two difficult swings, two different preparations, yeah.

If that's the answer for the question... Jesus, I feel like so slow and stupid right now. Why?

Q. You were saying you thought maybe the time that you had off, you'd be able to shut off, but you were obviously doing the rehab. How much more mentally fresh do you feel right now? Do you think that you'll be more mentally fresh for this hard court season and the US Open than all those players in Paris right now?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I definitely feel like being in Paris right now, it's a lot of responsibility and it's a lot of pressure, like different pressure.

It's still way to go to the US Open. I feel like they going to be ready. They're going to be ready to go. Probably they'll just, I don't know, take a break. They're not going to play whatever.

It's way to go to US Open, so everyone is going to be ready to play. I'm pretty sure that's why they're on top of the ranking, because they were able to switch off and be

ready for the tournament, for the important tournament.

But talking about me, I think at the end it was very important for me to take a little break. I had really tough, tough struggles starting from March. It didn't stop. Probably it was much needed.

Like mentally, I feel more fresh and more ready to go. I don't want comparing myself to the players in Paris because I don't want to think that they going to be not ready. They going to be ready. That's why they're top players.

I'm just talking for myself. I feel it was really much needed, and I'll be ready.

Q. You spend a lot of time in the U.S., based in Miami. What are your favorite things to do in America, in general? What do you like about it?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, I love to be here. It's beautiful. Especially I based in Florida, which is just so beautiful there and so chill. I'm able to relax there.

Favorite thing to do? I guess, go for a good - it's always the same with me - good restaurants. That's my favorite thing to do.

In Florida particularly I like to go on the boat, just chill, relax, breathe this ocean air. It's help me to relax and to switch off and to just recharge.

Q. How different does now kind of the second half of the year feel for you in terms of goal setting, motivation? The start of the year everybody is ready to go, full of energy. Middle of the year in clay season it changes. What's different now as a top player to set goals for the next three months?

ARYNA SABALENKA: The thing is we're never setting the goals because it's quite obvious which goals we all have. We're going to have to talk about. The main goal for me is, like, after each block of the tournament just sit down and talk about what didn't work, what could I do better, what we have to do to improve some of the stuff.

So the goal is just to become a better player. After each tough loss, learn something and improve it. Just become better player. Of course, go as far as you can on the biggest tournaments.

Q. The Netflix show Breakpoint, do you think it does a good job of bringing in non-hard court tennis fans and making them care more about the sport?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Like Netflix show, does it help to bring more people?

Q. Yes.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I think actually that was a very good show. I think it was very good that they show about each player, like their personal struggles, what motivate them, what's keep them going, just showed the way we're living.

I think it actually help to bring more people into tennis, to learn more about players, to feel connected. I think that's the best thing for all of us to feel connected. I don't know. I think it's definitely help to bring more people.

Q. This is the only 500 level combined men's and women's tournament, here in the nation's capital, how cool is it to be here this week?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, I'm super happy to be here. It's a cool tournament, a beautiful city. I haven't been here for like, what, seven years I counted before I started interview.

It's very nice to be here. Yeah, I feel really like home here.

Q. Are you close with Frances Tiafoe at all? He's from here. Has he been giving advice to other players about what to do?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I didn't ask. Probably I have to ask. Not like we are close friends. Obviously we are talking sometimes. Yeah, I feel like I have to come and ask for good places to go. I think he's the one who's going to give me good advice, right?

That's what I'm going to do after this interview.

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