

# Western & Southern Open

Tuesday, August 17, 2021

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

## Simona Halep

Press Conference



S. HALEP/M. Linette

6-4, 3-6, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Just talk us through the match today and also what made the difference in that third set against Magda.**

SIMONA HALEP: Well, it was a strong match. In my opinion, both of us played really well. Yeah, maybe the rain delay helped me a little bit to find again the energy. I was a little bit more stronger physically and mentally in the third set.

**Q. Given how tough I would imagine the last few months have been for you, what did this win mean for you?**

SIMONA HALEP: Well, it means a lot. I'm really happy that I could win the match. It's always important to have victories when you come back from an injury.

It was a tough injury for me. First time in my life when I had this kind of problem, and I didn't really know how to manage it.

But I'm happy to be back. I'm happy to play pain-free, and I'm just trying to build my confidence back.

**Q. After all that time off because of the pandemic, how did it feel psychologically to have to miss more time? How were you able to sort of reconcile that emotionally?**

SIMONA HALEP: Well, last year was easier because everybody was home (smiling). But this one, this period was tougher because everyone was playing and I missed two Grand Slams.

So it was a little bit painful, but, you know, these things I hope will make me stronger. Now I can just enjoy more the fact that I can be on court.

**Q. It's great to see you back and playing well. It has**

**been very hard for all the players and everything. Can you share maybe some advice or some thoughts on how you cope with the pandemic and also with your injuries? Like everything seems to be tough and sometimes can put players out of balance.**

SIMONA HALEP: Well, I think we all struggled a little bit last year, because for everybody was something new to stay four, five months home. Without tournaments, it was a big cut of the rhythm.

So when I came back last year, I was pretty okay. I won two tournaments. I felt good. I needed that break mentally. But was not easy in the pandemic period, because I was a little bit scared of the virus.

But then slowly, I build my body. I was strong when I started. In Australia I did quarterfinals, so I thought it's going to be okay. But then injuries didn't let me play as much as I wanted.

I just feel a little bit more like wiser because I have to take care of my body at this age. I have many years already played on tour. I just want to take care of my body better and slowly to come back to my level from previous years.

**Q. Coming back from injury, now you have the rest of the year. Have you set my goals or expectations maybe for this tournament or for the rest of the season?**

SIMONA HALEP: No goals. The main goal is just to be healthy and to play as much as possible, because I need the matches, official matches. Even if I practice a lot, home is not the same. To build the confidence, I have to keep playing matches. Hopefully I can win a few more (smiling).

**Q. How do you feel after the minor injury that you suffered today?**

SIMONA HALEP: It was just a contracted muscle for the moment, and with the rain delay I worked a little bit with my physio and it was much better. So now hopefully tomorrow I can be fit again to perform at my highest level.

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**Q. Just a follow-up on the injury, when you were grabbing your leg, it did look reminiscent of what happened to you in Rome. Did you know right away what it was and were you nervous it could have been something worse?**

SIMONA HALEP: Well, I never felt something like that. I was standing so I was not running. It was a big hit in my muscle.

I didn't really know what's going on in that moment, but I asked the physio when she came, and she said it's probably a broken muscle. So I was shocked, because I didn't do much in that moment, so I didn't know that it can be broken so easy. But it was maybe from previous practices, previous matches. So, yeah, I didn't expect that at all.

But, you know, you learn always something from this sport.

**Q. But in Cincy today, did you know it wasn't as serious as it was in Rome just because it was so much worse that day?**

SIMONA HALEP: Yes, yes, definitely was not the same pain. It was just a contracted muscles. Yeah, one movement. In Rome was everywhere, like I couldn't even step.

**Q. I'm going to ask you a question about vaccines, but please, if you don't feel comfortable answering, you can just pass. I think you were vaccinated. In New York or in the U.S. we are separated. People that are vaccinated, we can do more things around each other. In your case, do you feel comfortable with all the protocols that the tour puts in place for you? Do you think sometimes you feel a little bit afraid for those unvaccinated around you?**

SIMONA HALEP: I don't feel afraid, because I am vaccinated. I feel protected. I am taking care. I wear the mask when many people are around.

I feel much better when is open, the tournament. I don't like the bubbles. I feel very stressed when I'm in the bubble. So if people can vaccinate more and more will be better, because we will not have more restrictions anymore.

**Q. Just a question about your next match. You'll be facing two players who played very last week in Montreal, either Camila or Jessie. Can you just talk about the challenge of playing two very aggressive players, especially for you right now as you're kind of**

**starting to get your legs back under you, as it were, on the match court?**

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, it's a massive challenge for me to face them. They are with a lot of confidence, and they are playing great.

But, you know, I don't have expectations. I just want to be fit tomorrow because today was a tough one, and as I didn't play much, the body struggles a little bit. But, you know, I played against big players in the past, so I have enough experience. We'll see if the game holds tomorrow and I can be as strong as I have been today.

**Q. I saw during your time off you were in Romania at the event in Cluj. I just want your thoughts on the event, and are you planning on playing the second event at the end of October?**

SIMONA HALEP: Well, if my body holds, I will be happy to play. I always wanted to play home. It's a nice vibe and very special people there in Cluj. Hopefully I will play, yeah.

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