

# Western & Southern Open

Tuesday, August 16, 2022

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

## Emma Raducanu

Press Conference



E. RADUCANU/S. Williams

6-4, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on your win today against one of the greatest of all time. How do you feel?

EMMA RADUCANU: It feels pretty amazing, to be honest. I can't believe I just played Serena Williams. It's something that I think I'm really fortunate to have been able to do, for our careers to have crossed when there is such a big gap.

Watching her growing up, it was an amazing experience to just play her. I think from the beginning to the end, I maybe looked calm, but I just knew how important every single point was, because you let up a little bit, and, yeah, she's going to be all over you.

Yeah, she's just such a legend.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. What were your sort of expectations of what it would be like out there? And how did it compare to how it actually felt both in terms of tennis and I guess also your emotions and everything?**

EMMA RADUCANU: Yeah, I was, in the beginning of course, nervous. I think going out there I was really ready to be on my returns and, you know, just the speed of it sometimes like I'd have the ball on my racquet but it was just too powerful.

It's a really difficult serve to read. You can't tell where she's going, which makes it even tougher, but I think that the crowd was pretty electric. The stadium was really packed. Even if they were cheering for Serena, I was, like, it's 100% like going to happen. I was prepared for that.

You know, to play the greatest in her home country in a stadium like that, I knew, and I was all for it. You know, if she's maybe going to stop playing soon, then, you know, like 100%, like, Go cheer ahead.

**Q. With the draw coming out relatively early, and you**

**had days to kind of think about this match and everything, what were the nerves and what were the feelings like? How did you manage that? You only hit one unforced error today in the entire match today, which is a pretty remarkable stat.**

EMMA RADUCANU: Yeah, I didn't really know that stat, but I got the draw. I didn't even open the draw. I mean, I got a text saying, You're playing Serena, exclamation mark. I just landed from Toronto. To be honest, my initial reaction, I was just like, Wow, that is writ, and that is a gift. I can't believe it.

I mean, the chances to play her may be one of the last opportunities I get to play her. You have to cherish the moment, and you're going to have this memory for the rest of your career.

Yeah, I was just really trying to make the most out of every single point out there and give myself the best memories of when I played Serena once.

**Q. You got off to such a big, quick start. I think you broke at love. You were up 4-1. What does that do to your mindset? How important was that for you?**

EMMA RADUCANU: Definitely important, because it's always good to get off to a good start, but at the same time, you have these like doubts when you are up, when it's almost going too well in the beginning, because, Well, you are playing Serena, you let up a little bit, and these thoughts start coming into your head.

When I got broken after being 4-1 up, I knew like that was like a little opening that I gave her, and she definitely capitalized, and I think that she started to play better.

I was just really focused on like keeping my composure and holding my next service game. Because of that good start, you kind of give yourself room to -- I had two breaks, so I got broken once. Yeah, just definitely focused in and zoned in on the next one.

**Q. In the second game, you talk about zoning in, how can you describe that second game when you defeated**

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**her 6-0? Your emotions from that second game, how did you...**

EMMA RADUCANU: Second game of?

**Q. Second set, sorry.**

EMMA RADUCANU: When? The second set?

Yeah, well, I was just like I was telling myself, Just hang in every single one of her service games, trying to make her work as hard as possible for her service games.

I think I did a really good job returning today. Then I was just, to be honest, being really stingy. That's probably something that I just focused on a lot on today. Obviously I think I had in the back of my head like one opportunity, she's going to take it, the crowd is going to be behind her, you're going to be out here.

I was just really focused.

**Q. From your answers, it sounds like today more than anything else was a mental than a physical challenge. I'm curious how physically your game held up in round No. 1, if you were happy with your performance today on court and how you take today's match moving forward?**

EMMA RADUCANU: Yeah, I think that a big part of the match today was definitely the mental side, you know, to not be intimidated by all her achievements.

That was what I was focusing the most on, just like being really, really present and thinking of my game, thinking of what I needed to do.

Physically I think that I held up pretty well. Like there were some longer exchanges, like a few, and, yeah, I held up well and I scrapped. I made her work. You know, sometimes I won the point when it mattered. Sometimes she won the point, like having the upper hand.

I mean, I feel good right now. It's just a quick turnover for tomorrow morning to play, so yeah, just going to try to recover. Actually haven't even showered yet.

**Q. You normally play the best; also beat the best. Where is your head right now? Are you going to relish in this at all, or are you ready to move on into the next round?**

EMMA RADUCANU: Yeah, I think it's important to really cherish the wins, because I think that if anything, like this year has taught me that the wins don't come by easily. No

matter what win that is, it means a lot to any athlete, and I definitely am going to take it in, be really proud of myself.

But as I said, it is a fast turnover tomorrow, and I probably have got 12 hours until I'm back on site. I think that I'm playing another slam champion tomorrow, so it's obviously going to be really difficult. Yeah, just going to try to prepare as best as possible.

**Q. In terms of your confidence going into New York in a couple weeks, how much better do you feel after having a moment like that and a win against a player like that tonight?**

EMMA RADUCANU: Yeah, I think it does help. You know, playing Serena and managing to win, I'm obviously like really proud of myself, and it does give me confidence.

I think that at this level, you play anyone, it's a really difficult match. Each of those wins kind of build confidence regardless of, you know, the sort of -- regardless of the level you're playing, every single win counts. But of course this one more so, because you're playing like the greatest.

But I'm not trying to get too high or too low right now. I'm just trying to stay on one path and trajectory, because I know like I kind of feel like I have been on both ends of that, and, yeah, I'm just happy, proud of myself, but, yeah, just moving on.

**Q. After the win, for such a big win, you were quite understated. Was that part of not going too high or too low?**

EMMA RADUCANU: Well, yeah, I think that playing Serena, you don't like -- to be honest, I was just like in awe and you don't want to -- I think I said, like, one "Come on" in the match, and I was just staying to myself, because I respect her so much as an athlete, as a tennis player, as a person.

I think she's done amazing things for the sport. I didn't really want to make a scene. Like she's done so much for the sport that, yeah, I just respect her a lot. I think that no big celebration was necessary. I think the biggest celebration is just like what the crowd kind of gave her and honored her. Myself, as well.

Who knows how many times I'm going to see such a great champion out there again.

**Q. You are coming back tomorrow and you play another great champion in Azarenka. Just curious what your thoughts are on her, what you know from her.**

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EMMA RADUCANU: Yeah, I have watched Vika play her whole career, as well. Not her whole career. I mean my whole career.

She herself is a great champion. I watched, I remember more recently when she was playing in the US Open and made the final in like I think 2020 during the bubble. I was studying for my exams. I hadn't played tennis in like two, three months, and I was kind of just dreaming that one day I'm going to play on Ashe, and one day I'm going to be at that level and playing these great players myself. Everything felt so far away.

Obviously with the last year I have had, getting great exposure to these great players, and every time you get to play them, you get to learn from them as well and what they do really well that has helped them in their careers. Yeah, it's going to be a tough match tomorrow, for sure.

**Q. Now that you got the Serena bucket list experience, who do you most want to play on tour? Not counting Azarenka tomorrow. Who do you want to play that you haven't had the chance to play yet?**

EMMA RADUCANU: I would say one person. I would love to play Simona, just because I think she all around is like, for me, all around the most complete player.

She moves extremely well. She's aggressive. She can defend. She makes you work so hard for every point. Could be like a slow, painful, you know, like she gets you (smiling).

But I think just to be able to feel that would be great.

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