

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

## Karolina Pliskova

Press Conference

Ka. PLISKOVA/M. Vondrousova

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. What has been feeling so good for you this week on clay? Obviously New York probably didn't go exactly the way you'd want, but obviously first big tournament back. Now it seems like you're very comfortable this week on court. What has made the big difference in terms of getting that comfort back?**

KAROLINA PLISKOVA: Yeah, I mean, everybody was talking about how bad America was for me, but I guess I was the only one which didn't think that way. Although the results don't always have to be great to feel good about yourself, and just even to travel there I think was a big step.

Maybe that's why I feel much better here, because I have been in that experience in the bubble, and I just played some matches. We all know that in the last couple years I had a lot of matches, so that's something what I need.

Even though I didn't have many of them in America, I felt even those, what, three matches kind of helped me to feel that I'm back, back competing on tournaments.

I guess here with every round I feel better. I had tough opponents, but every match I feel like my level is a little bit higher.

The girls are tough on clay, so of course clay has never been, like, my favorite surface, but now I know that I can play some great tennis and I can win tournaments on clay, too.

And I'm enjoying. I think it's great. Although all these restrictions are quite tough, but just to be back in Rome and competing.

**Q. Obviously clay is not your favorite, but now you're in back-to-back Rome finals, which seems like somebody who at least is okay on clay. How has your**



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**attitude towards clay shifted over the last two years as you have had these great runs?**

KAROLINA PLISKOVA: Yeah, it's been strange relationship with clay. It's not like I hate. I more hate grass than clay (smiling).

You know, I think I had some great weeks. Of course I played semis in Paris, so it's not like I don't really look forward to play on clay. Of course it's nice change because on hard court we are quite long time.

And I know I can play. Actually, I feel like I have more time on my game on the clay, so I feel like some of the best matches really I played on clay. I had some goods victories.

I feel it can be for me. And even with every year I prove even more, because till last year, okay, I won some tournaments but maybe smaller ones and maybe was indoor with something like Stuttgart, but last year when I won this tournament here I think was a big step. And now I can do it again without really having huge preparation on clay because there was not much time.

So it's more I think with me is always about my mental, you know, side, how I feel, where I am at, and how I enjoy. So that's the most, you know, difficult just to be in this kind of shape.

**Q. I notice this week a lot of times you have been wearing a ponytail, which is unusual for you on court. Midmatch you switched it up today.**

KAROLINA PLISKOVA: Press conference I go back to this (smiling).

**Q. What has been the strategy there? What is your thinking? What are your thoughts behind the ponytail and changing it?**

KAROLINA PLISKOVA: Yeah, actually I think I try just for the first time. In the first round I said, Okay, I change my top from having the dark one to white one. Then I just try to change my hairs. Maybe it's gonna work.

And then of course you keep doing the things which are working. When you win -- I don't really change things, but

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so I just said, Okay, so I give it a try, because even Olga and couple people, they say, Why you always have like this on the head? So I say, Yeah, but it's so comfy for me. Then if I sweat, the hair goes everywhere. Here actually I felt the last two days was super humid, so still I went back to this what I have now.

But I'm trying. Actually, I saw myself on TV, I think it looks more beautiful. But tennis is first, so it has to be that it's comfy for me, and then we can talk about the hairs.

**Q. Do you have a game plan for the final for your hair?**

KAROLINA PLISKOVA: Well, of course there is always a plan, but, you know, pretty much the same what I have been playing, because the girls there are quite similar now what I have been playing.

You know, I think it's going to actually be similar to Marketa, but, yeah, let's see. Not thinking about it yet (smiling).

**Q. You're obviously very familiar with Simona's game. You guys have played a lot. With respect to your belief on clay, am I right that the three-setter that you guys played at Roland Garros a few years ago, that that was maybe a little bit of a turning point for you mentally in terms of your strength on this surface? Or am I making that up?**

KAROLINA PLISKOVA: Maybe you're right, but that time I think I was not really at the mental, whatever situation where I am now, because at that time I was, like, Okay, I play Simona on clay, there is almost no chance, so let's just enjoy.

So I was more in this kind of thinking. Now if I would play her in the semis, I would just go for it and think, okay, of course I can beat her.

I mean, we had a lot of good matches and started -- I think the first match when I beat her was in Fed Cup in Romania. The surface was super slow. Then somehow the belief started pretty much there.

And then of course Paris, in the end I was, like, okay, I almost won. Like, I was still far away but it was super-close match. Then she was playing great that tournament, and always she's playing great in Paris.

That kind of helped me just to believe that even on clay I can beat her, even though it's like her surface, not mine. Of course I beat her in Madrid and couple times.

On hard court I think is different story. That's my surface, I

feel like (smiling). Still I was able to play good tennis on clay. So it's going to be super tough because she's fighting. She won tournament in Prague. Now she's back in the final here.

I think it's never going to be easy with her no matter which tournament it is. It's going to be great final.

**Q. Before Cincinnati, you were saying that the six-, seven-month break was very good for you mentally, just the mental break. And I think you said that people might not see it in my game, but I'm so much more mentally fresh now than I was before and it might take some time. Do you still, three weeks into it, is that still how you feel?**

KAROLINA PLISKOVA: No (smiling). I mean, I feel like we are back to where we kind of were. Of course maybe we appreciate more -- like, I feel like the things like media and stuff like this, they don't go on my nerves as much as they did before.

But still, it's a nerve game, I would say, tennis. So still there is a lot of tension. You play, like this tournament, I played two girls from my country, which is never nice, so there is always some extra tension.

I don't feel like I would be super -- like still some tension there is always there, but of course the break helped me. And I felt like I missed tennis, which maybe before I didn't have this feeling during the season.

So, you know, it's good that we are back, but I feel like it was normal season, actually (smiling).

**Q. The crowd, this is the first day in Rome they have had fans in the stadium, and I wanted to ask just how different that was, and also what you think of the French Open's plans. They are currently planning on I think up to 5,000 people in Chatrier there. So how do you feel about that idea?**

KAROLINA PLISKOVA: That definitely was nice to have some people out there. Just didn't feel that empty, because yesterday it was first time I played actually on center court here in this tournament this year, and it felt super empty, like super lonely (smiling).

So it was better today. Was couple kids and just like here and there you hear some things, so it's not so really quiet. So I felt like it's quite nice to have, you know, some people, although there were not many of them.

And about Paris, I think it's good, but I think it's quite unfortunate that it's going to be only on one court, not even

on Suzanne Lenglen. I think quite fair would be at least two or three big courts, but I guess it's not possible really.

So, I mean, at least something is good.

**Q. On today's match, can you talk about just what is it about Marketa that makes her a tricky opponent for a power player like you to kind of hit through? And what do you think you did well to get the win today?**

KAROLINA PLISKOVA: I think she's maybe one of the best with Simona, I would say, on clay in defense, because there is not many girls they can slide this way and they can get to that many balls.

And of course she anticipate well. So it's kind of like tough for me to really make that winners as I'm used to do in some of the matches, and of course on clay it's even more difficult.

And I feel like she can really play some, you know, ugly game. She can slice a lot, can play dropshots out of nowhere, spin her forehand. I think you're never really going to feel amazing, the timing and stuff.

But still you have to go for your game. That's what I was trying to do, but especially the second set I think I did couple more mistakes than in the first. But that's how she plays. I think she just plays this way, so her opponents, they feel just like ugly somehow.

But I think with this game, like, she can be super dangerous and we can see it on her results on clay. Even on some hard courts she was playing great tennis. She's competing always. She's just fighting.

**Q. How much of a relief was it for you to play the way that you did yesterday against Elise? Obviously in the zone and playing incredibly well. It felt like that was maybe the best couple of sets of tennis you have played maybe even this year. Did it feel that way? Did it relax you a little bit that you touched that level?**

KAROLINA PLISKOVA: I mean, it's always tough to go and play the next day after when you play incredible match, although, like, I still had some games where I didn't play that well yesterday, but I felt like there was not many things which I would do wrong.

Of course I'm always going to miss because I go for a big risk, but I felt really was maybe one of the best matches this year, for sure, and then maybe on clay like ever.

It's difficult to go and to just repeat, you know. And then of course you have expectations because, oh, yesterday I felt

incredible, so of course, you know, it's tough to feel two days in a row incredible. It never happened to me.

So this is kind of tough just, you know, to go on the court and just to know like what you're gonna feel, how you're gonna feel, because then the opponent is different. She's lefty, so of course it's a little bit different game always.

I just try to maintain and not to expect that it's going to be the same way, because it's never going to be the same way. I felt like at some point I was like close to what I played yesterday.

Didn't feel somehow that easy today, but, you know, still I feel the game was there.

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