

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Simona Halep

Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I just want to get your general thoughts on being back in Rome, being back at the tournament. Have you got a chance to practice, check out the conditions of the clay?

SIMONA HALEP: The weather is beautiful. The courts are beautiful. The club is beautiful. So everything is beautiful here in Roma. I'm really happy to be here. It's alive and the energy is nice.

I had the chance to practice this morning. Yeah, it's first practice, so it's never great from the first moment, but I feel good. I'm looking forward to start the tournament. I'm excited to be here.

Q. You either face Angie or a qualifier. How would it feel to play Angie your first match in Rome?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, not easy. A very tough draw. Always when I played against her the matches were tough. So I expect a tough battle, and I just want to give my best. There is chance for both of us, so it's gonna be tough.

Q. I'm curious, first of all, what your thoughts are with respect to Aryna Sabalenka winning Madrid, her first clay court title. You know how hard it is to win that event, and you also know how difficult of an opponent she can be sometimes. Can you just talk about is it surprising to you to see her win an event on clay?

SIMONA HALEP: No, is not surprising. She's playing great. Very powerful tennis. She has confidence. She can actually do a lot like in Grand Slams also, so she's getting closer to that.

She played final in Stuttgart, so it's not the first result on clay. So, yeah, congrats to her. She's playing really well. Yeah, I think she's very high with the confidence. I was not surprised, and I'm expecting actually more from her (smiling).

Q. How does it feel to come to Rome, a city that you love so much, as a defending champion for the first

time?

SIMONA HALEP: Well, it's weird that six months ago I have been here (smiling). You know, it's a little bit different. It's nice because it's one of my favorite tournaments. I don't mind to be here.

I have no expectations and no pressure about defending title, because it's another year. It's different time. But I'm excited to be here, so I just want to give my best. As you saw, the first round is going to be very, very tough. I'm just here to give what I have.

Q. Do you feel as though, because normally there is only one week between Rome and Roland Garros and obviously this year there is two weeks, how much does that change anything about the clay season to you? Would you like it this way? Do you prefer it to be just one week? What are your thoughts on that?

SIMONA HALEP: Well, never been two weeks, so I don't know what to expect. I don't know exactly how it's gonna be.

But in my inside I feel like it's good for me to have an extra week on clay. Maybe few days off after this tournament and then already to go to Paris.

Yeah, I don't mind this change. I know for some players it's difficult because they are far from Europe, and they cannot, like, they lose a week. Yeah, I'm good with it.

Q. Going back to Madrid a little bit and the loss to Mertens, with a few extra days to process and things like that, what are your kind of takeaways from that match that you feel like you can apply this week in Rome?

SIMONA HALEP: I think the game looked okay. I don't really have regrets about that. But I can say attitude a little bit I need to calm down a little bit, not rushing that much and to stop missing in the important moments.

But those things I think are coming with more matches, so I'm just looking forward to have as many as possible until French Open. This tournament is going to be important and taking the pressure away, because it's a nice time now. We are back at the tournaments and kind of normal,



... when all is said, we're done.®

soon it's gonna be normal. Yeah, I have just to enjoy and to relax. I need that.

Q. Just thinking back to your title run in Rome last year, what is the memory, the highlight? What is the most vivid thing that you remember of last year, or I guess six months ago, like you said.

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, well, I think the feelings. I have been feeling really, really well, and I was excited to be here. I felt the court, the final, the first set was really good. I was very confident.

But then Karolina had to retire so was not the end that I wanted, but I think all matches were good and I played some good tennis.

Q. There has been this sense, talking to a few of the players and speaking to a few journalists, that there seems to be a change in the kind of vibe amongst the players on the WTA Tour, just we're seeing a lot of, like, really nice moments at the net, a lot of sportsmanship with people, a lot of players practicing with each other, just maybe a little bit of a different vibe. I'm curious, is that something that you notice at all, or is that completely made up? I don't know.

SIMONA HALEP: I think it's natural now because of the pandemic, and the pandemic changed many things in our lives, my opinion. We are more relaxed. We really notice that other things are more important than a tennis match or victory.

So I think we like to share more with the others and just going closer a little bit more because we couldn't get closer with this virus. So probably that's why, when we have a chance, we just go to the other one more closer.

Q. I want to get your thoughts on this. The ATP announced that they are going to be easing the bubbles and the restrictions, but the WTA is still working on it. What do you think? I just want your opinion on that.

SIMONA HALEP: Well, I haven't read the ATP announcement, but I wish that WTA will do this thing also, because we really need to relax a little bit, because the bubble is always tough, as I said. I keep saying that.

But, you know, they know what they do, so we will wait for them for their decision. And also, the governments have to approve these rules, these new rules.

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