

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: You've had a wonderful clay court season so far. How are you feeling heading into Rome?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'm super happy to be back in Rome, one of my favorite tournament. Beautiful city. So, yeah, just super happy to be here. Hopefully I can do well here in Rome.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Indian Wells, Miami, two back-to-back two-week events. Very rare for that. Here you'll obviously go back to back, then into a slam almost immediately.

ARYNA SABALENKA: One week.

Q. Seven weeks total.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah.

Q. Do you have any sense as to how difficult or how much trickier it is to navigate this or not? Does it feel different?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. Just feel different. Yeah, it's back to back, then it's one week, then a slam. But tournaments are like two weeks so you have time to manage your energy, to rest a little bit. So it's not that tricky.

I don't know. I'm not thinking about how tired I am. I'm just focused on each match, trying to be as consistent as I can, every time bring my best tennis.

Q. How do you feel to have the heritage from Serena Williams? You look like the only one who is able to have so much power on court, to return and serve like a man almost. Do you feel that or not?

ARYNA SABALENKA: If I feel that or not?

Q. To be the new Serena.

ARYNA SABALENKA: To be what?

Q. The new Serena Williams.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. I don't think about that. That sounds good, you know (smiling)?

I don't know. I'm not thinking about that. I'm not focusing on that. I'm just focusing on improving myself and getting better every day. Yeah, that's it. I'm not really thinking about that.

It sounds crazy and it sounds good to be really strong (smiling).

Q. You defeated Iga Swiatek a few days ago in Madrid. You're closer to her in terms of points of ranking. Do you think you can get even closer to her starting maybe from here in Rome?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I'm doing everything I can to get closer not like to her but to my dream. I'm working really hard. I'm trying to stay focused on every match, every tournament. That's what I really want to do.

Hopefully, yeah, I can get as close as I can or probably even - how to say...

Q. Overtake.

ARYNA SABALENKA: ...Overtake.

Q. All tennis players say they're just trying to get better, like that's the goal, to improve your game. How much easier is it when you have a target to improve your game? If you're chasing No. 1, chasing your first Grand Slam, does it make it easier motivation-wise or...

ARYNA SABALENKA: That's a good question actually.

Yeah, of course, when you have a target, if you have really big motivation, it's not like easier, but you have a goal behind all those tough practices. It's easier to keep going. When it's tough, you remind yourself why you're doing it.

It's not like easy, but it's really helping to stay strong and keep pushing yourself to the limits and keep improving yourself.

I mean, yeah we're always saying about trying to improve



... when all is said, we're done.®

ourselves, trying to focus on our ourselves, because this is only way you can play well and you can show your best tennis and focusing on the right things instead of, like, ranking points, defending, all this stuff.

Q. What has changed for you in the last year? Last year there was the start of the war. What was the different feeling you have with the other players? Has anything changed in one year since the war started? If you think about Belarusian, Ukraine, whatever, the other players, the tournament, organization, there is anything that made progress, that you can say, Well, we are more accepted than we were before? If you could find what could be the change in one year since everything started...

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, it's a tough question because everything, I want to say, you can play around it. It's tough to say.

What exactly you mean 'changed'? The ones who was hating us before, I don't know, our country, for where we're from, they still hate us. This didn't change and I don't think it's going to change because of the situation.

I'm happy that we are allowed playing, that WTA doing everything they can to kind of handle this situation as good as they can. Yeah, that's it.

The only thing change for myself, not like I stop thinking about that, I just start focusing on myself and understand that I've done nothing bad to Ukraines, that is not my fault, not the fault of Russian and Belarusian athletes. We are just an athlete who could do what they can and who play sport. This is the only thing what help me to stay focus and just to play tennis.

Q. This is the change?

ARYNA SABALENKA: This is the only change. The rest, how can I change? It's the war.

It's not like yesterday they hate us, today they love us, no. It is how it is. Unfortunately we have zero control on this situation. Yeah, that's the worse, that people expect something from us, and we cannot do anything. That's the bad thing about the situation.

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