

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

## Aryna Sabalenka

### Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: Aryna, how does it feel being here in Rome?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'm super happy to be back in Rome, one of my favorite tournaments. Madrid was tough couple of weeks. Of course, not the result I wanted at the end. Still happy with those couple of weeks and looking forward for here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

#### Q. Happy birthday.

ARYNA SABALENKA: You say 'happy birthday'?

#### Q. Belated.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Thank you.

#### Q. I know Madrid didn't end the way you wanted it to, but what positives do you take from that week, especially with some distance?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, there is lots of positives from Madrid. I fought myself back. I found my game. I bring everything back together and start playing on high level. I fought couple of really tough battles against top players there and I got some wins. Was close to get another title. But yeah, it is how it is.

I'm still happy with those couple of weeks. Yeah, I would take as good weeks than bad.

#### Q. You always talk about how close you are with your team. I'm curious, how important is it to have the tight-knit group around you? Also you see some players who have a lot of people around them. Is it possible to have too many people sometimes at tournaments and traveling?

ARYNA SABALENKA: You mean, too many people as 'team'?

#### Q. Yes, like a team, friends or whatever.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, yeah, I'm very close to my team. I would call them my family. They've been there for me no matter what. I had so many tough life situations, and they were there for me supporting me and doing everything for me. I'm trying to pay them back same way. I'm always there for them. Whatever they need, I'm happy to help them.

I mean, my team is quite big, so I feel really comfortable being in a big team, like big family. For me feels, I don't know, more like a home. I feel really good to having all them together on the same tournament, have them all together. I think that's possible.

It's also important to bring the right people, meaning the people you can trust, you're assuring those people 100%. It doesn't matter if it's 10 or if it's one person, it's all about having the right people around you.

#### Q. Do you have a feeling that there are the best three in the past, you, Swiatek and Rybakina? There are so many people very strong but with some not so perfect like you.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I'm not perfect at all, but...

#### Q. Between you three, do you have a feeling that the difference is by surface, so you little bit better on cement, and Swiatek is on clay and Rybakina on grass, or depends of the just the day between you three?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I mean, obviously Iga is much better on clay than me, for example. I would say Elena is better on grass. I'm maybe a little bit better on hard court.

At the same time I cannot say that it's all about the surface. I mean, as the time shows, I can beat them on clay, on hard, on grass. It's not about the surface, I would say. It's about honestly in each match couple of key moments where, like, probably she played better.

For example, last match with Iga, I wouldn't say on those important points I did something wrong, it's just I was doing the right thing, but she was doing it better little bit. It's just about little things.

Yeah, it's not about the surface. It's a process. You learn from that little mistakes you made during the match, then



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you go and work on them, you try better next time. It's just little improvements, like little percentage better every day. Hope for the better result.

**Q. After a tough loss like in the Madrid final with match points, do you have any techniques that you use to stay positive, to forget about it, just move on?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Emotionally is my main technique (laughter).

If I would lose that match 6-Love, 6-Love, I would definitely stay negative for long because I would feel that I didn't do my best and I didn't try my best. In that match, I would say that I left it all there. I was fighting for every point as best as I could. Yeah, I missed couple of opportunities.

At the same time, like I just said before, it's not like I was doing the wrong thing, it's she did it a little bit better in those key moments. Next time I'll try better.

It's already in the past. Why would I stay still there? I would just be better move on and work a little bit more, make sure next time I'll be able to play better.

**Q. In terms of the rivalry with Iga, I'm wondering how important and special that's becoming now to your career. Do you feel like the two of you are starting to maybe separate yourselves from the other girls at the top?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: What do you mean 'separate myself'?

**Q. (No microphone.)**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know, it's tough to say. I mean, I'm not trying to focus on that honestly. I know we have some rivals, meaning like me, Iga and Elena. We're doing maybe more consistent, play more consistently past years. Maybe last year and this year so far.

I would say that in tennis, anybody can beat anybody. If you would start thinking like, My level is there, they're somewhere there - how to say - you're not respect them, you underestimate them, and you're kind of like losing it because you're not - how to say - focusing well enough for them.

I wouldn't say the level is that far. It's all about being focused, do your thing, not thinking about all these ranking situations, the level is higher than them. I'm focusing on myself and making sure that every time I'm on the court I bring my best tennis and hope that I'll still be there in that top three players, yeah. Yeah, that's it.

**Q. I've seen many kids starting to play competitive tennis when they're eight, 10, 12 years old. When they lose, most of them go back to their parents either crying or complaining. With you, especially recently, when you lose we see you smiling like you don't suffer so much for the loss. Were you always like that even when you were a kid? Have you changed and learnt how to bear the defeats in a different way?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Okay, that's a big question.

I suffer a little bit. Last time I crashed my racquet, that's how emotional I am. I just throw it out once, I was okay afterwards.

When I was a kid, I was also crying, I was pissed. There was lots of different emotions going on.

What I learned in the past is just the momentum. Yeah, now you lost, but you have thousands of opportunities to get that win. It's just momentum and you just have to be respectful. You just have to accept the loss and just move on and work and try better next time.

If you get to that stages, to the last stages of the tournaments, I mean, it's impossible to win all of them. Sometimes you just have to lose to learn something. Then maybe on the bigger tournaments or in the most important tournaments, you will remember the lesson and you'll do better in the final.

It's all the process, you know?

**Q. You mentioned that you focus on yourself. I'm curious, was there ever a point in your career, maybe more at the beginning, when your ranking was a bit too much in your head, and it affected how you played?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, of course. I mean, as I said, it's all the process. You're learning. Everything comes with experience.

At the beginning, of course, I remember was it 2018 when I just break through and I get to the top 10 at the end of the year it was? The next year, the whole year I was thinking about defending the points in the end of the year. I was struggling a lot. I didn't play my best. I was getting frustrated a lot because I was already thinking about the future and stuff.

After that year, I learned that it's actually really doesn't matter. Actually that year I defended all those points, I stayed on the same level. I realized that it actually doesn't matter. We have 25 weeks.

Anyway, the top five players, now it's okay, they have like 10,000. Then it is like seven, five, six. Basically if you do well on six, seven tournaments, you're in the top 10. You don't have to worry in the first tournaments that you have to defend points in the last one. You still have the whole year to do well, be there, fight your way to the top.

Yeah, everything comes with experience. I struggled a lot in the beginning. I was learning all these little details. So now I get to the point where I'm like not really focusing on the points. I know if I'll be physically, mentally ready to play, I will play well and I will get to the last stages the tournament.

I'm trying to focus on myself so I'm healthy, mentally and physically, and I'm ready to play my best.

**Q. When it did affect you, would you look at the rankings?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Now or... ?

**Q. The past when it affected you negatively.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: It's not like I was looking. I just remembered that I have to defend the points, make sure I still stay in the top, whatever. But I wasn't, like, really checking the WTA app. I was just like I had it in my head.

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