

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

## Maria Sakkari

Press Conference

M. SAKKARI/A. Kalinina

7-6, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: Maria, congrats on the win today. Could you just walk us through the match.

MARIA SAKKARI: Sure.

Very tight first set obviously. I think I was not so aggressive. I was just playing more her game instead of playing mine.

But luckily I just came up with a few good points when I needed them. I just feel like it was always going to be tough because she probably likes this tournament a lot. She made the final last year.

Just very happy that I managed, like, to change my game and just be more aggressive in that second set.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Back into the round of 16 at another big tournament, getting the matches and everything like that. What has been the biggest boost for you in terms of getting consecutive wins consistently, whether that's your confidence or finding your game? What has been the biggest benefit?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I would say it's a combination of a lot of things. Things changed for me in Indian Wells. I just felt like, Okay, another final. Then went to Miami, another quarter. Charleston, semis.

I just felt like there was a consistency which I really like because I feel like that's what's going to take me to my level where I'm going to hopefully win a big title. That's what I'm looking for right now.

So, yeah, I would say things are in a good way, and that's what makes me very happy on the court.

**Q. When you have a new coach, how much actually changes in your day-to-day in terms of your practices?**



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**Does David come in and everything changes or does he come in and the way you work is kind of the same...**

MARIA SAKKARI: I don't know. My transition was very smooth. That was a very good thing. Obviously in that first tournament, you get to meet each other. It is a little bit awkward the first days. That's the thing with everyone.

I think the fact that he's very relaxed and very laid back, it made it so much easier for me.

In terms of coaching and stuff, I've said it many times, he keeps it very simple. He just doesn't over-complicate things. There's no discussion between us, which I like, because I can get very distracted in the match.

I just feel like the things he says, I just trust him and I just follow what he tells me. I just like how it's going because it's a very different approach to what I was used to all my previous years.

**Q. A lot of players will talk about how different red clay is from green clay. What was your decision behind playing Charleston given how many matches you played in Indian Wells and Miami? What about green clay helps you translate into red?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I just wanted to do something different this year. Because I also had Billie Jean King Cup - I always say 'Fed Cup', that's why I'm laughing (smiling) - I just wanted to do something different.

I have to be honest, my results in Stuttgart were not the best. I just felt like, Okay, I'll give a shot to Charleston.

Obviously it plays different, but there are certain things that you have to do the same. You move the same. You try to build up the point the same way.

I would say that Charleston in that last match played very heavy. In general green clay plays faster than red clay. The last two matches it felt heavy. Maybe because of the weather, it was rainy, wet and cold. That's a big factor on clay, red or green, how wet it is.

**Q. Only two women have ever been able to win Madrid and Rome in the same year. It was Dinara and Serena. Does that number surprise you? Would you have**



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**thought it would be higher or lower? What are your thoughts about how difficult it is potentially for both the guys and the girls to win these tournaments back to back? And does it change because this is a two-week event?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, I think it's tougher now that it's two weeks. Maybe we do get more days off, but especially if you're from overseas and you're from Europe... For example, I had a few days between Madrid and Rome. I had the chance to go home. Some people cannot do that. They just stay at the tournament. It's just another hotel. You're going to the site every day. It can get a little bit too much. I find it very tough, and I see a lot of retirements.

It does surprise me that it hasn't happened obviously the last, what, year. I don't know. I just feel like it's two very different tournaments. Especially when it was a one-week event, probably the transition would have been a lot tougher. From the final, you would have to start the next day, right? You didn't have a week between the two. It was back-to-back. I think it's very tough to do that, yeah.

**Q. I'm writing a piece about the rankings. I was wondering if there was any time, not now but in the past, that you had ranking goals and you wanted to reach a certain ranking. And can it bring extra pressure for any player if you focus too much on rankings and not developing as a player?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I think that every player has this same goal of getting to top hundred. That's a thing with everyone. Like, that's your first big step in your career, breaking into the top hundred, because it guarantees you main draw in Grand Slams, main draw in a lot of big tournaments. I just feel like, yeah, back then I was obsessed. Then top 50, then maybe being seeded in a slam.

I have to say that, like, after the US Open in 2021, I was 12 I think. Playing Ostrava got me to top 10. But I wasn't so obsessed. I didn't know even that Kvitova had to lose.

I was like just at the lobby of the hotel. Tom back then was like, Okay, congrats, you're top 10.

I was like, What, how? I had no clue.

I guess when you feel you're in a good place, everything is going to come. But then once you're top 10, like, it's tough to maintain that. You just want to stay in that spot as much as you can.

**Q. I think the only reference point we have for back-to-back two-weekers is Indian Wells to Miami. Is**

**the transition between those two tournaments, like, the same difference as Madrid and Rome? Is it crazier what you have to do from Indian Wells to Miami compared to what you have to do in terms of adjustment for the game, vibe?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I think no one complains about Indian Wells-Miami because it's been like that at least since I started playing those tournaments. I got to those tournaments and I knew it was going to be two weeks. We knew that all the other tournaments were going to be just a week.

I've been lucky enough that the last three years I played good in Indian Wells, so I didn't have so many days between Miami and Indian Wells.

I'm sure it can get tough. If you don't have a base in the U.S. - I'm lucky that my boyfriend lives there - so I can visit him and it's going to feel like home. At the same time there's a lot of Europeans I know that would lose, fly back to Europe, come back for Miami.

It's decisions that unfortunately we cannot make, we cannot change, and we have to I guess accept, even if we don't like them.

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