

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

## Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference

I. SWIATEK/A. Sabalenka

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THE MODERATOR: Aryna, probably a little disappointed today, but hopefully overall happy with your performance here in Rome. Please assess the match and your time here in Rome.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, it wasn't the final I really expected. Didn't play my best at all.

Anyway, I'm going to be positive after these couple of weeks. I went through so many things during these weeks. I'm proud that I was able to, no matter what, stay there, to keep winning, to keep fighting my way to the final.

Even though it didn't go my way, I'm still happy with the result here in Rome.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. What did you try to do more in the second set because today you had to set the bar very high, pushing on forehand of Iga? My impression is that you focused more on the backhand, then when you gained some meters, you tried to open the angle. I don't know if it's something you tried to do, if you tried.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, it's interesting question.

I mean, I would say the first set I didn't play well at all. I wasn't - I don't know - feeling my game well. In the second set I just tried to stay a little bit more aggressive. Maybe I tried to go through her backhand so she doesn't have the forehand too much. I just tried to put her a little bit under pressure.

I had couple of opportunities to break her serve. Probably if I would take that opportunity, the match would go differently. I didn't use it, so it is how it is.

I'll try better next time.



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**Q. You forced seven break points, five in one game. What makes her so difficult in those moments? She saved all of them.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Saved break points? What makes it difficult?

**Q. Her difficult to beat in those moments. She saved all of them.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. I know that she's moving well and I have to stay aggressive, I have to keep pushing. There is little chance that she's going to give me an easy point. Maybe knowing that, it makes me rush things a little bit.

I guess that's what I'm going to try to do differently next time when I'm playing against her, not rush things, trust my game, and know that I don't have to overdo stuff to get those key points.

**Q. You talked about your back injury. Did it affect you today?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, when you have some sort of injury and you're trying to recovery during the tournament, anyways it stays in the back of your mind. You try to kind of, like, protect your body a little bit. So probably in some points there was moments where I could push myself a little bit more but I didn't want to get injured before Roland Garros, so...

It's kind of like affecting you a little bit just by being there in the back of your mind. But I wouldn't say I lost the match today because of my back. Obviously not.

But, yeah, I think I did pretty well here in Rome struggling with illness, then injury, lots of stuff happened. Anyway, proud of myself that I've been able to get to the final, no matter what.

**Q. For Roland Garros, what are your feelings after these two finals against Iga?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Going to Roland Garros, you mean?

**Q. Thinking about Roland Garros, what are your**



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## feelings?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I'm super excited. I love Paris. I love Roland Garros. I did well last year there. I'm super exciting going there.

Even though I lost these two finals, I mean, I never focus on the past. No matter how many times I lose to the player, I know anyway if I'll be there, if I'll be fighting, I'll be focusing on myself, I know that I can get that win.

I mean, I'm going there with the confident that I can do well there.

**Q. We saw that you enjoyed the city these days. Yesterday evening, too. How much is it important for you to find the right balance between tennis tournaments and the free time enjoying the little things?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I think it's really important because we're so much under pressure during these weeks. The tournaments are getting longer. You have to balance that, otherwise it will just get too crazy.

I mean, me personally, I would lose it if I wouldn't be going out, enjoying the city, changing the picture, try to relax, recharge, enjoy my time off tennis. For me that's really important.

I figure out the time I actually have to go out, I have to do stuff. Not only tennis. For me that's really important.

**Q. In the last matches you used lots of dropshots, volleys, but not in this final. Why?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: It's a good question, you know. I wish I would use it more often today. Probably would be a bit different (smiling).

No, I think she just didn't give me much opportunities to use it. Different style of the game. She's playing a little bit heavier balls. Balls were quite deep. I didn't have much opportunities to go for the dropshots. I tried couple of times. Couple of times it worked, couple times not.

I mean, I would say today wasn't my best game, my best day. When I'm not feeling my best, I'm not going to go for extra, something extra. I will try to keep it simple till I find the rhythm that I can use all my assets. I didn't get to the point where I could go for it more often.

**Q. As we go to Paris, do you consider yourself, after what you've done in Madrid, in Rome, and what you have done at Roland Garros in the past, as a**

**tournament favorite there, or do you consider, with Iga's success at that event, yourself an underdog there?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I mean, I'm not like underdog there. Being No. 2 seeded, it's tough to call yourself 'underdog'.

I'm definitely not the favorite probably there. But at the same time I do feel that I can actually go for it. It's 50/50, you know? But I prefer to be underdog (smiling).

Yeah, I really hope I'm going to make it to the final and I really hope I'll be able to get that win, if it's Iga or not. It's an amazing tournament. It's a Grand Slam. I'll just go there and fight for every point and see what happens after the tournament.

**Q. From your point of view, what is special about Iga? You have to face her maybe in big stages. From your point of view, in which aspects she's too strong or...**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I think her movement is incredible. You always know that you have to build the point and you have to finish the point. It's not going to be an easy point anyway. You have to be really there 100%.

I think that stay in the back of my mind, and that's why sometimes I try to overhit balls, knowing she's going to get to it. I think that's something I'm going to work next week, try not to over-rush stuff, trust myself, my game, that I'm able to stay in the point as long as needed.

But yeah, I would say her movement is really, really good. Obviously she's playing really smart. You can see that during the game. She's No. 1. I would say she's really good in every asset of the game.

**Q. In a situation like that where you also say about Roland Garros, of course you are thinking about it, you have to play two weeks in Madrid and two weeks in Rome, in your opinion is it better to have two weeks with rest during the tournament, mind always focused on the tournament, or one week, more matches close, but then you have more weeks free? Next year with Canada and Cincinnati, it will change even more.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I know that so many players are complaining about that. They would prefer one-week tournament. Me personally, I don't know, it's tough call. I know myself. For me is better to have one day off. I'm able to forget about tennis for a day and to be kind of like relaxed, not be mentally too much.

For me, these two-weeks events is better because I can

balance everything and I can do well in two tournaments in a row. Before, when it was one-week event, it was just too much. Sometimes matches are really high intensity. After you finish the tournament, me personally, I was mentally, physically off. I just wasn't ready physically and mentally for the next one. I would lose it in the first round and just go and prepare for Roland Garros.

I like it that way more because I have more chances to do well in the two tournaments in a row. Then anyway you have a week off before the Grand Slam, which is enough time to recharge and prepare yourself mentally and physically for the Grand Slam.

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