

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Tuesday, 6 May 2025

Roma, Italia

## Aryna Sabalenka

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, belated happy birthday.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Congrats on Madrid. Your thoughts on being in Rome?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I'm super happy to be back in Rome. I'm really happy that I was able to celebrate my birthday in such a beautiful city. Super excited to be back.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. I don't think it ever clicked in my head that you were born on Cinco de Mayo, the significance of that. How nice was it to celebrate your birthday on a day off?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, what is the holiday?

**Q. Cinco de Mayo.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: That's Mexican, isn't it? Maybe not the best holiday to be born.

THE MODERATOR: No Margaritas for you?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I know it's a holiday, but I didn't have Margaritas by the way yesterday. Didn't have much time.

What was the question? I got lost about this holiday.

**Q. What a relief it is to celebrate your birthday on a day off.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, yeah, it wasn't a day off (laughter). I had tennis and fitness in the morning. But my team made sure that it's, like, half of the day I'm practicing and half of the day I'm celebrating win in Madrid plus my birthday. So I had fun. Yeah, it was a beautiful day. Much better than if I would have to play a match, come back home very late, there's no time to celebrate. So that was good.



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**Q. You've had an incredible season, making all these finals. You've won a bunch of them. Also lost a bunch of them. How is it? Because when you play in a final, it's great when you win, but I imagine it's also the hardest thing to lose. The best and the worst feeling. What has that been like? Good problem to have in some ways?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I was just about to say that, this is the good problem to have.

**Q. Has it been new for you and hard to adjust when it doesn't go your way on the ultimate day?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, honestly, that's a good problem to have. At the same time some of the finals I lost were really heartbreaking and were really tough to kind of like accept. At the same time I understand that sometimes you just have to learn and sometimes you're not that good on court, you just have to accept, learn from that loss, and come back stronger.

What I'm actually proud of that I was able to come back in those finals and I was able to change things and see if the lesson was learned, try to bring better tennis in the next final.

**Q. Over the years of I've seen how difficult it can be for players when they face an injured player. It can get into your head and make it hard to play freely. For you, what's that experience been like? Have you ever had a time in your career where you struggled against an injured player?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, right now I don't really remember playing against someone who is injured. I feel like anyway you have to focus on yourself. Yeah, you see what happens on the other side.

If the player is smart enough to stop at the right moment, they're going to just stop the match. This is not the best feeling for me, to stop the match in that way. This is not something which is under my control.

Also whenever you see someone struggling on that side, I think this is the moment to bring focus back on yourself and do your thing and that's it, not to waste your energy on that side, you know, because you cannot change anything



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and you cannot say, Hey, listen, maybe you should stop. I wish you could say that, but you cannot (smiling).

You just have to focus on yourself and wait for someone maybe to just stop the match or just finish the match and make sure that the other person is okay.

**Q. You had your issues with one or two calls in Stuttgart. What do you make of the electronic line calling on the clay in Madrid?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I think in Madrid was much better. Me personally, I didn't see any mistakes. I know there was interesting situation with Alexander which is quite obvious for me that was a mistake. I think they figured the system on another day.

My situation was much worse because the referee actually got down, checked the mark, and called it out, where it was obviously in. Not every referee are strong enough to accept their mistake and to, yeah, make a right call. Once again, we all making mistakes and it's okay.

Right now I prefer the Hawk-Eye system. I trust it more with most of the referees. Most of the referees, lately I had the best referees. Even if it wouldn't be a Hawk-Eye system, I would trust them. I think maybe it's better, so less tension between the player and the referee.

**Q. You have over 11,000 points in the rankings. This means the last 52 weeks have been amazing for you. Did you have time to reflect on how good your year has been? Or in tennis it's just like a very fast process towards the next tournament, next slam, so there's no time to reflect on that?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I always say going to reflect on the season by the end of the season. Right now, I mean, if I think about what I was able to achieve this season already, I'm like, Wow, that's a lot. But I try to take it one step at a time and focus on each tournament, each match, do not stay in the past.

But yeah, I think so far this season been super nice to me (smiling).

**Q. Last night was the first training for Jannik Sinner here. During the training, somebody from the crowd say to him, Jannik, you are as handsome as Sabalenka.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: (Laughter).

**Q. For sure, loudly. Did you know you were a point of reference of beauty for Italian people?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Wait, if I have what?

**Q. You are the beauty standard for Italy.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, I always feel connected to Italy, to be honest (smiling). So grazie mille. I don't know what to say on that. Thank you.

**Q. Did you get any really great presents for your birthday?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I've got a lot of cool stuff. I got a lot of flowers from the brands I'm working with. I really felt like part of the family of each brand, which is incredible.

Lots of friends send me flowers. It was really beautiful day and probably the best birthday I ever had. I got a lot of cool gifts, so many fun gifts from my team. I'll post it later.

So yeah, it was fun day.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I got watch from my boyfriend.

**Q. A few months ago you posted on Instagram a ball when you were training, 20 minutes after it was really fluffed up. A lot of players think the balls have been different since COVID. What is your perspective on that, if they're worse?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I mean, we have different balls mostly like on each tournament. In Middle East tournaments, both were so hard on the body. Honestly, coming back after Australia and play in those conditions, like where everything is super slow and the balls are super heavy, the balls are getting like this big, and you have to play. So many players are struggling with, like, shoulder injury or back injury I think because of the heaviness of the ball. I think we need to consider of changing the ball, so figure the way it's not that hard on the body.

So yeah, I mean, in Middle East, the balls I was shocked. Just 20 minutes of hit, it was new ball, now this big. No logo, no anything on the ball. Yeah, it was quite fun experience and heavy.

**Q. Have you experienced that elsewhere? Has that been an issue in other parts of the season or is that mainly Middle East?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I think Middle East mostly probably.

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I think it all depends on the surface. If the court is super slow, we have to kind of compensate it with the lighter balls. When the court is super fast, then we can go for a little bit heavier balls.

At the end of the day I think we need to kind of make it as, I don't know, same as possible so we're not changing the balls that much. I think it's so hard on the body.

You know I'm getting old, so I have to take care of my body. Maybe for Mirra Andreeva it doesn't matter, but she has to be on the same page with us (smiling).

**Q. Rome is known as one of the most beautiful areas to play tennis. I saw some people complaining about the rebuild of Pietrangeli. Does it affect your game where you're playing, if the stadium is full of people, if the architecture around the stadium is nice or not? Does it affect your game?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I have to say that it's definitely more enjoyable to play when you see the full stadium, when you see beautiful nature around or the statues like here. You see these and you think, Oh, my God, this place is a paradise. It definitely give you good vibes.

I'd say really helping to stay positive on the court and to bring your best tennis.

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