

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Tuesday, 5 May 2026

Roma, Italia

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, welcome. How does it feel to be back in Rome?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I'm happy to be back in Rome. It's such special place. Always, always enjoy my time here and food (smiling). So I'm super happy to be back.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Curious how, after playing so many matches where you come from behind, made incredible comebacks, how did you shake off Madrid and move past that?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. I think it was a great match. Yeah, I had opportunities to play great. Nothing from me to regret about. I did my very best. We did practice those things that didn't work in Madrid. Hopefully I'm better prepared for Rome.

Q. Happy birthday.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Grazie.

Q. How do you intend to celebrate tonight? Why this year should be the right year to win Rome?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know (smiling). We just going to go for dinner probably with the team. Still have to practice, unfortunately, do the media, do all of the work stuff, then easy afternoon, dinner, that's it.

Why this year is the right one? I don't know. I just take it one step at a time and hopefully actually it's the right year, then I will tell you why it's the right year (smiling).

Q. Can you explain to us what it means so many up and downs in women tennis matches? Many times you can see 6-1, 1-6, 6-1, or like happen to you recently, you had to save six match points and get one. In many cases you won. This up and down is because the level is very high? Is because the emotions are too strong? Is because why?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, that's a very interesting question. I think maybe the level is high. I think the level,



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it's pretty high. If you lose focus for one game, is gone, the set is gone. It's not very easy to stay focused from the very beginning to the very end. That's the only explanation that I have, is because the level is getting higher, which requires more focus and more of a consistency and a better level. I think that's the only explanation.

Plus being a woman with the hormones changing, you can change the match. You can go from one side to another really quick. I guess that's the only explanation I have.

Q. We heard from the players over the last couple days their disappointment with the prize money at Roland Garros.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Hmm...

Q. And other issues that are ongoing. I wanted your take on that topic.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Definitely when you see the number and you see the amount the players receiving...

I feel like the show is on us. I feel like without us there wouldn't be a tournament and there wouldn't be that entertainment. I feel like definitely we deserve to be paid more percentage.

What can I say? I just really hope that all of the negotiation that we are having, we at some point are going to get to the right decision, to the conclusion that everyone will be happy with.

Q. You say you're the show. How far do you think it could go? Do you think players would ever threaten to boycott?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I think at some point we will boycott it, yeah. I feel like that's going to be the only way to kind of, like, fight for our rights.

Q. Actually a fashion question. Did you get a chance to see what Venus Williams and Serena Williams were wearing at the Met Gala last night?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I love it. Actually I was having a dinner yesterday. We were chatting with girls that we're going to go back home and go through the looks because

... when all is said, we're done.®



we were just having fun.

When I got back home, I really loved. Like it was so many cool, I don't know, like story behind outfits. I really loved it. All of them were stunning.

Q. On the prize money topic, how much input have you had yourself? How challenging is it thinking about these things when you're obviously focused on your career as well?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I'm trying not to, like, overthink that because we're trying our best, we're doing what we can do. Let's see how far we can get. If it's going to take players for boycott.

I feel like nowadays, we girls can easily get together and go for this because some of the things I feel like it's really unfair to the players. I think at some point it's going to get to this.

Q. When you look to the results in Madrid, you think of first five out very early, then just one of the top 10 who goes through. When you think, was just a moment, one tournament in a while? Special conditions there? You think you have other thinking? Is maybe the other players are very, very strong, like you said before, you can have tournament like that, or maybe Kostyuk is very, very strong and is coming?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I think this tournament was really overall out court. So many players got sick. So many players pull out. So many top players pull out. So many players didn't feel well while playing there. Plus the conditions.

I mean, once again, we all human being. It's okay to drop the level sometimes. I just really hope it's not going to happen on the bigger tournament like Grand Slams and here in Rome also.

It's okay. I mean, like, you're paying too much attention to that. Sometimes it happens.

Q. Did you find, when sort of moving up through your career, moving from playing on smaller courts to the bigger courts, not so much the crowd, but the dimensions of the court, having more space, did that make a difference for the player?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Obviously yes. Every time I play, like, points on the practice on the smaller courts, it feels so tight and so fast and so, like, I don't know, too much of a pressure on you.

The moment when I go on the bigger court, it kind of feels like you can breathe, everything is more wide open, you see court differently, it feels differently, and you have more space to move around.

Yeah, I feel absolutely completely different on smaller courts than the bigger courts.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, like the stadiums are all, like, big. I cannot complain. If you compare all of the stadiums in the tournament, I feel good on all of them. They all feel quite big and enough space to run. If you're talking smaller courts after the stadiums, then it's a big difference.

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