

Miami Open presented by Itaú

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

Miami, Florida, USA

Victoria Azarenka

Press Conference



V. AZARENKA/Y. Putintseva

7-6, 1-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Vika, congratulations. You're through to your fifth Miami Open semifinal. How are you feeling?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Excited. Very happy with today's win. Yeah, it's good to be back in the later stages of the tournament, it's what I work for, so yeah, definitely very happy to go through.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. I want to get this right. You won here in 2009 against Serena Williams, in 2011 Sharapova, Kuznetsova 2016. First of all, what do you love about the Miami Open? What would it mean to you to win a fourth title here this year?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, all those three wins were not here, so that would be pretty special to make the change for, you know, a new facility. But yeah, I feel like it's a bit too far ahead to talk about that. Still in the semifinal match, and with my experience I should know better that to stay present.

Q. There was a crazy interruption in the first set. Looked like either the power went out or Hawk-Eye was down or both. Can you tell us what was going on and what was your reaction while all of that was happening?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, my reaction was not the best. I thought it was -- obviously in that moment where you're playing a match, you're like, okay, you need to stop, how long you need to stop for? I have no idea. It's not an easy definitely thing to handle.

The power went out. Apparently there was Hawk-Eye working but nothing else was working.

Yeah, it was a first one that happened to me, so it seems to -- hopefully it doesn't happen again through the tournament. As I said, it's quite challenging to kind of, do

you wait, do you warm up, do you sit on the court? No one knows what's happening. I think that was probably the most confusing part.

Q. Can you talk a little bit just about the match itself in terms of the key to that first set, especially how tight it was towards the end? Then bouncing back after she took the second 6-1.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, for sure. I think that I started to be, I wouldn't say flat, but a bit less aggressive. I think Yulia played a really good match. She's incredible fighter. I do feel like this year she improved. She plays a little bit more aggressive. She doesn't give you two of the same balls, so you constantly need to be adjusting and adapting.

I feel like I had some of the, you know, some of the breakpoints at 4-3, couldn't really convert them, so it was a lot of -- I wouldn't say momentum switching, but a lot of really tight, tight games with fighting, both of us fighting.

That 5-4 game was really important to kind of hold. I was facing few set points. I felt like I held really strong there, especially mentally, to try just to continue to give myself another opportunity. The tiebreak was, I felt like in tiebreak I really took control and I was playing aggressive.

Second set, I think that first couple games I didn't, you know, I had couple loose points, and then 3-1, 4-1 was, like, wow, my legs were a bit tired at that point, but I think mentally I was, like, okay, 4-1, you have to go all the way back.

I feel like I didn't necessarily think, okay, it's going to be a third set, but if there was going to be a third set, I need to reset and I really need to see what I can do rather than kind of trying to adjust to her game. I think that was a good, the way I came out in that third set was very decisive. I think I executed my game plan really well, and closing out, especially at 5-3, I think it was pretty strong.

Q. In the third set, it seemed as though you were just in full flow. The decision-making was quite crisp in the way you were constructing the points aggressively.



What do you think is, not the explanation for that, but why did it look like it was all coming together for you in that final set?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, I thought that was important for me to, as I said, to reset and start kind of fresh, not to really think about, okay, you know, it's whole other set to play. Just really to stay point by point. I wanted to be more aggressive, I wanted to be more following to the net, and I wanted to finish and dictate the points earlier. I think I just focused on that rather than anything else.

Q. I believe you have trained or train at Chrissie Evert's place in Boca. She has said some very nice things about you, so she's obviously a legend here and throughout the world, actually.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: In the tennis world, for sure.

Q. So I'm curious, No. 1, have you hit with her? No. 2, when you do have dinner, do you talk tennis, family, and all of that? Has she helped you from both a physical and mental standpoint to be the great player that you are?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, Chrissie is a dear friend, for sure. I definitely look up to her. As you said, she's an incredible legend of our sport. What she has done for women's tennis is undeniable.

I feel like we don't necessarily talk so much about tennis. I really appreciate her as a person, and she's been going through some difficult moments in the last few years. Definitely just trying to kind of support her in that way.

But she's always checking in on me, always wishing me the best. She believes in me pretty strongly. So it definitely gives me definitely a boost of energy that somebody like Chrissie really, you know, has my back and really believes in me and pushes me forward.

Yeah, I'm very happy and very grateful to have that opportunity.

Q. Just going back to the situation on court when the power went out, with the years of experience you have and the number of years you have had on the tour, do those incidents remain as frustrating as if it were the first year and you hadn't that experience as it is after so many years? So in other words, does it become any easier to deal with, or it's still a major frustration?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, it's definitely a frustration, and dealing with that, I'm not sure it's the years of

experience rather than being a parent helped me with that (smiling). It's learning patience, is my biggest challenge, for sure, being a parent rather than being on the tennis court.

So those situations are definitely frustrating, and as I said, it's not necessarily of what happened is that when you are on the court you have no idea what we need to do, like, you sit on the court or you can go out of the court, are we going to continue to play, are we going to play with line umpires?

It was just very uncertain situation, and I think in the situation where you are kind of already at high nerves during the match, it's probably adds to it. The frustration feeds that.

Q. Athletes, competitors always talk about the hunger, right, the hunger to win, hunger to succeed. How would you describe what that concept means to you now at this stage in your career? Is it very different or not different at all to the Vika of 10, 15 years ago in terms of what she thought being hungry as a competitor meant?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I think there is two different ways to look at it. One is what it motivates you to win, right? For me, it definitely shifted when I was young. And especially where I come from and the way my career was going, one of my top motivations was to prove people wrong and to really, like, you say I can't? Well, watch me. So that was my primary motivation.

After I achieved being No. 1, winning Grand Slams, winning gold medal, and so many titles, and probably also becoming a parent, like, that motivation was not a priority for me. It's not something that made me, you know, turn on, like, beast mode.

So I needed to find what it is I don't need to prove people wrong. I mean, I have a big list of résumé to not do that but to shift and find what it is that's going to motivate me. That's been, I wouldn't say a challenge, but it's definitely a searching process.

I feel like this year, especially like after the kind of pretty challenging last year, I feel like I was able to at least find that space, and I'm working through that. It's not an overnight thing and, you know, once you got it everything goes smoothly, but I feel like I'm in a good place where I'm on a good track.

I am hungry, and my hunger comes from that I want to learn more and I'm trying new things and I'm okay with those. I feel like I'm accepting a little bit better, not failing

but trial-and-error concept. It's not easy, because I want to win all the time in everything I do.

I have a little boy who is mirroring me, so I can understand how intense that can be. But yeah, so for me, I would use those in two different concepts.

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