

# BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, October 17, 2021

## Victoria Azarenka

Press Conference



P. BADOSA/V. Azarenka

7-6, 2-6, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Vika, can you talk about the match today.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I think it was a really deserving final match. There was a lot of incredible moments, a lot of fight. I think we both gave it all out there. I think that's what you wish for the final.

The outcome was not in my favor today, but I thought overall it was an incredible match. I can take a lot of positive out of these last two weeks. Of course, congratulations to Paula. She really played well today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. It was extraordinary tennis. For many watching, probably the women's match of the year. What did it feel like actually being in the middle of a match like that?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I would agree with comparing it to the match of the year. I think the entire match the quality of tennis was super high level. We were both going for our shots, really pushing each other to the max.

I think that's what made it super entertaining, that competitive spirit, really fighting for every ball, not giving in anywhere. It's very challenging to maintain that. I think that we both did that really well.

**Q. Was it just too intense of a situation during the match for you to enjoy what was actually going on as much as we were able to enjoy watching it?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I think you do enjoy the fight. But in the moment it's more about focusing on what you have to do. So I don't think you have really time to pay attention of what it really feels like. I think that actually will take your focus more away.

So it's about being in the moment, not necessarily

analyzing the moment. I think that's what makes -- how it makes it feel out there.

**Q. Where do you think the match maybe tactically -- what worked against her? What did she adjust against you? What ultimately made the difference today?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I think that she was very, very solid in the important moments. I had some opportunities. I created a lot of opportunities, as well. She stayed strong.

Overlooking the match, I think in the first set I could have been a bit more aggressive, where I felt like I let her play a little bit more the game she likes in some moments.

Then in the second set, I really adjusted that. The third set, it was going back and forth. She also played more aggressive.

I think that first set I could adjust a bit better. I think moving forward, hopefully we'll meet again where I can try to challenge a little bit better.

**Q. This was her first showcase on a big court against a great champion. This is your first time you played her. What was your general sense on her game? Anything surprise you in playing with her?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Really the physicality was very strong from her today. She really did maintain a very high level throughout the whole match. So I would say those two things were pretty challenging today.

Sometimes you can be more nervous playing in your first big final. Sometimes you are a bit more free. I felt that today she was playing, you know, really free. I haven't obviously played against her before so it's harder for me to say that. But throughout the match there were moments where she was going for it.

I don't know if it was an advantage or not. But she definitely pulled out some incredible tennis today.

**Q. This is actually the longest women's final ever at**



**Indian Wells. It's the longest women's match of any kind this year. The two of you seemed to be not really fazed by that. Is that fair to say? Was it pretty exhausting out there? Could you talk about the match physically and mentally.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I think both come together. I think if you kind of give in mentally, physically it becomes even harder. But I wouldn't necessarily say that we weren't really unfazed by it. I think just in the moment this is what you have to do, is keep fighting for one more point. The adrenaline is there.

I think after the match, when you ask her or me, Was it challenging physically? Of course it was. But I was actually very happy that I was able at the same time to maintain that level of fitness, of my game throughout over three hours. That's a really positive sign. It actually motivates me to keep moving forward.

This year has been challenging a bit. But finishing on a strong note not necessarily with the result I wanted but with the progress I wanted to seek, that's really positive.

**Q. What do you think you can take from this strong finish after a tough year? Even in defeat does it give you some satisfaction that you had such a great run here?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I've been talking that I've been looking to implement some of the changes into my game. I have done that well today. I think that throughout these two weeks I've been improving little by little those things that I wanted to do. Those are the things that I actually want to take out into this off-season, work on it, and bring it even hopefully better next season.

But the most important for me was to also see for myself that physically I'm there, I'm ready to play as long as it's needed, match after match. I think that was a bit of a challenge, as I said before, for me during the year physically with some injuries.

It's time to rest, train smart, and no quarantine in Australia for me (laughter).

**Q. In the third set at 2-0 when you went for the break, what was your self-talk like at that point?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Not necessarily much of self-talk. Just short words of encouragement. I think that's what really is all there is to say. There's not going to be a long conversation. There's not going to be a debate or too much analyzing. The game is too quick.

It was just normal words of encouragement. 2-0 is not a favorable position, but it's not the end of the match. No matter what the score is, I'm going to fight until the last point. Everybody knows that. All my opponents know that. I know that, too.

That doesn't change for me. The score is not going to change my attitude.

**Q. With Paula's victory today, do you recall what it was like for you to win the first time here?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I think when I won here in the desert was in 2012, right? I have won already a Grand Slam, which not necessarily made this achievement any smaller, but it was not I think my first big tournament. I won Miami before.

I think that's a little bit different. I still was very excited about it, but I don't think it was maybe as big of a moment as it is probably for her today.

**Q. She had some really nice words for you on the court. What does it mean for you to be facing opponents who are telling you that you inspired them to play?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Honestly very touching. I think that's also part of my motivation also to play, is to inspire people to be in our sport, not necessarily in our sport, to go after their careers, keep pushing the boundaries for women in sports, careers, anywhere.

It's very touching. It's always important to be a good player, a better person off the court. If I inspire people with my tennis, that's only even more motivating for me to keep doing what I'm doing.

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