

BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, October 17, 2021

Paula Badosa

Press Conference



P. BADOSA/V. Azarenka

7-6, 2-6, 7-6

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

PAULA BADOSA: Yeah, I think it was a really tough match. I think it was really good one, as well, because she played an amazing level. I think I had to rise high level every set. At the final third set I think I played my best. It was only option if I wanted to win, so I'm really proud of it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How did you deal with all the emotions? It was an epic match. How did you manage to stay calm and focused through all the game?

PAULA BADOSA: Yeah, it was really tough. I think she was playing on a very high level. In that moment I started to focus -- at the final of the third set I started to focus on what to do every point, every ball, and not think of anything else. I think that was quite important because it was a final. I really wanted to win it so bad.

I tried to focus on what to do and nothing else.

Q. Probably the women's match of the year. It was extraordinary tennis. What did it feel like actually being in the middle of that? What was going through yourself emotionally when that last point was finally won and you collapsed to the court?

PAULA BADOSA: Yeah, it was a really tough match. I think it was like a roller coaster mentally, emotionally. It was my first final in a 1000. I had a lot of emotions.

I was playing Vika. She's a great champion. I admire her since I was a little girl, so that's another thing.

Yeah, it was amazing. I'm still a little bit in shock that what happened right now. But in that moment I was super excited and super proud of what I did after three hours fighting on court.

Q. With the week that you've had, beating four top-20 players and Azarenka, what has this taught you about the tennis and how you're able to compete with the best?

PAULA BADOSA: Well, I think the first thing that I've learned this week is that nothing is impossible. If you fight, if you work, after all these years, you can achieve anything. That's the first message that I see that could happen. And to dream. Sometimes you have tough moments. In my case I have been through tough moments. I never stopped dreaming. That's what kept me working hard and believing until the last moment.

Today was the same, so I'm really proud of it.

Q. Potential moments that could have derailed your season, how have you been able to manage those disappointments to come back stronger every time?

PAULA BADOSA: You know, this year I had, of course, a roller-coaster year, disappointments and everything. But after all I've been through in my life, it wasn't disappointment. That's the good part. When you suffer a lot, when you're young, when you have a little bit of disappointment, you don't feel it like that. So that's the good part of what happened this year.

Of course, I have bad moments. But compared to the things I've been through, it's nothing. For me it's okay (smiling).

Q. Could you talk a little bit about the path to believing that you belong out there in a final like that. It's obviously one thing to have the shots; another thing to be able to hit them under that kind of pressure. Can you talk about how you've gotten there and how you felt there today? Did you surprise yourself at all?

PAULA BADOSA: Yeah, I felt really good. I really loved to play out there. It was a really tough match. I know she was going to play amazing because these kind of champions, they play very good on the finals. So I knew I had to play a very good one, as well, to fight. That's what I

did.

I enjoyed. Of course, I suffered in some moments because it was my first final, big final like this one. I really wanted to win it. So of course you suffer. I think I enjoyed it because I think we played a very good match.

Q. About your own path to believing in yourself, you talked about the fact of what you've been through has made you stronger. How difficult has it been to get to a point where you believe in a match like that?

PAULA BADOSA: Well, after all, if I never stopped working hard, now I have an amazing team that's helping me day by day, I feel comfortable there. I feel happy.

I start believing slowly, of course, winning one match, then another one. I think the key as well is to work very hard. As I said before, to dream. Of course, every morning I wake up, and my dream is to win a tournament like this or to win a Grand Slam. Of course, that keeps me motivated to keep working and to always believe.

Q. Considering what you were just saying, things were tough for you between the juniors and now, what would you tell your junior self? What kind of advice would you have given yourself and maybe other junior players now who are looking to make the transition?

PAULA BADOSA: I think the toughest thing when you're a junior and you're a good junior are the expectations. People think that when you're a good junior, next year you have to be a top-20 player or top-10 player. You have a lot of expectations. People wait a lot of you, put a lot of pressure on you.

I think the key is to have a good team and to work day by day, to not listen a lot, and to make it simple. Sometimes we complicate things. And to enjoy. Of course, it's very complicated. A lot of people were texting me today, Try to enjoy the final. I was like, Yes, I wish (smiling).

Try not to enjoy in the matches, because you get very nervous, but try to enjoy the journey.

Q. Can you talk about your team. You just mentioned expectations, some things about perspective. Throughout the week, how were they able to help you stay on even pace?

PAULA BADOSA: Yeah, I think we had a very normal week. We were doing, I don't know, we went to play golf, went to have dinner at nice places, we went shopping.

I was very focused on the matches and the practice. But

then we had a little bit of everything. I think that's very important because in my past, I was like all day -- of course you have to be focused, but super like not happy, on my room. I thought that was like being professional.

I think you have to try to find the balance on that because if you don't enjoy outside, it's impossible to have good results. I think my team is doing a very good job on that.

Q. You've spoken a lot about the transition, the difficulties you've had in your career. Have you ever worked with a sports psychologist? If so, what is the most important thing that you've learned about yourself and your game?

PAULA BADOSA: Yeah, I've worked with a lot of them. I think it's very important in tennis. Maybe, I don't know, 80, 70% is mental. I think it's very important toward that part.

I've worked everything: the expectations, the pressure. Now I'm working with him to try to find the balance of hard work, and as I said before, enjoy. I think that's why I'm winning so many matches. That's why I'm having a good year because I found that balance. I have like my work time, I do that 100%, but then I have time to turn off mentally. I think that's a little bit the key.

Q. Is it safe to say that coming into Indian Wells, was the WTA Finals in the back of your mind? Obviously now you're very much in the hunt to qualify.

PAULA BADOSA: No, I wasn't even thinking about that at the beginning of the week.

I think I started thinking about that when I was maybe in quarterfinals or something like that. I didn't want to see it, but I start thinking about it, yeah.

At the beginning it was impossible for me to think about that. When I saw the draw, it was a really tough one. Yeah, it was tough for me to think I could win this tournament.

Q. Do you know what your schedule looks like going forward? Do you plan on playing?

PAULA BADOSA: It depends because now of course it's a goal to go to the WTA Finals. If I'm in, I'm going to rest until, I don't know, maybe I want to play a Fed Cup. I will try to play that. Then, of course, the Finals.

If I'm not 100% in, maybe I will play in Cluj-Napoca. I don't know. I hope I'm in and maybe I can rest some days (smiling).

Q. Was there any moment of the match, at the most critical point in the match, where you thought on the eighth game of the third set, 4-4, three unforced errors, was that the most critical part of the game? How did you manage to come back?

PAULA BADOSA: Yeah, that was the toughest one. For one moment I had some negative thoughts there. I think I overcame very good on the next game.

I knew that for any player in the world, even that you're a champion, that's very tough to close the match. I knew I had to stay there as much as I can, keep fighting. I tried to fight every point in the 5-4 and I could win that game.

I think I played very good from the 5-All to the 7-6. I think I played really, really good.

Q. Did the thought of losing ever cross your mind at that point, when you were 5-4 down in the third set?

PAULA BADOSA: No. I never think of I can lose until I lose. That's a good thing that I always worked with my psychologist.

But, yeah, I had negative thoughts, Oh, my God, I had an opportunity here and I just lost it. Of course I had that in my mind. But I never thought about losing.

Q. You were 87th in the world at this time last year. You rise to 13 when the new rankings come out. Had you envisioned such a rise when the season began? What are your thoughts on that now?

PAULA BADOSA: No, of course not. I've never thought that in one year after I will be, I don't know, 13. I don't know my ranking right now after winning. Of course, I never thought that would happen that fast and I would have this year because I think it's amazing.

Yeah, I think I worked very hard in the pre-season. Maybe I didn't have the best results in January, February, in the first months, but I knew I was working very well and I knew results would come. I never expected this.

I'm very happy what's happening. I'm a little bit still in shock what happened today because winning a tournament like this, it's always been a dream.

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