

BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Victoria Azarenka

Press Conference



V. AZARENKA/A. Sharma

6-3, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Good performance today. Talk us through the match a little bit.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I think not easy to start the tournament also against opponent who maybe had couple matches under their belt here.

I felt that I played good in important moments. I think there was a little bit ups and downs in some games where I felt like I could be a bit more decisive. But again, I haven't played in a while. I have to get that match rhythm.

Today was a good start to play against an opponent who gives a lot of different balls. I played actually I thought really well. I'm glad that I was able to handle myself and turn it up when it was important.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Is there a specific shot that works for you, that you know you're in good shape?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Specific shot?

Q. That tells you you're in good form.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I don't think one shot wins the game. It's definitely helpful when I'm able to, I would say, have more winners than unforced errors. I would probably look at it more that way than one particular shot.

Every opponent is different. Not everybody is playing and giving you the same opportunity to use a particular shot. Like today, she had a lot of mixing up. My intensity, I couldn't step in on every ball. I had to adjust and play a little bit of variety.

I would say the most important is the ratio in the end of the match, is the winners versus the unforced errors.

Q. When you hit the practice courts before this

tournament, did things click back into place in terms of the conditions? Are you still adjusting, setting aside the match rhythm?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: It's a little bit different from when we played in October, I have to say. It's actually quite a lot different for me.

I feel like with the ball going through the air quite quick here versus the courts that are pretty slow and bouncy, I think it really is year to year of how well you adjust because you have to be patient with yourself here. Maybe there will be some unusual mistakes that doesn't happen in different conditions.

I think it's about adaptation. For me personally it's never great the first time. So we'll see how it goes this year.

Q. I saw you practiced with Coco Gauff earlier this week. What is the type of question that a player like her would ask you, if at all?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I mean, depends. I think it's not the time for long conversation. We have a minute, a minute and a half in the break.

I feel like for me Coco is one of the players who I feel like any moment is going to do some really big things. I think she's one of the most talented players from kind of her generation, at least in my perspective. I think she's got a pretty good head on her shoulders which is pretty remarkable at this age.

Practicing with her, I can just see the talent that she has and the potential that she has. It's a matter of putting it together. I think for her to mature and get confident with herself.

It amazes me. Her talent, as an athlete, is really impressive.

Q. Talk about what you've seen from Paula and her development.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I think she came on the tour



pretty kind of on the scene last year. I think in the beginning of the year, like, playing well on clay tournaments. I think Madrid was for me one of the times she kind of got on the mainstream and everybody started to kind of talk about her, her potential.

I really love her attitude. She's very humble. I think that's why we kind of get along really well off the court, too. She's a very hard worker. I feel like her game can develop further. For any of us, it's how willing are you to take that step to the uncomfortable, to the unknown?

I think if she's able to kind of go beyond that, she can go pretty far. She's already, what, top five (smiling)? It's a long road to a Grand Slam, being No. 1, but she's stepping on those opportunities.

Q. I see you're wearing a fitness tracker. How do you use the data from that for your training and health?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: WTA as a partnership with WHOOP. Something that I've also been trying to monitor and see how it can be helpful to my routine.

I think nothing really is perfect. It's about how well you can analyze the data as well as adapting how you really feel. I think overall it is helpful to bring a little bit more features.

One of the things we actually had talks about in our meetings is opportunities for women's health, actually how not enough of research for women athletes there is for different things. A lot of research is based on male athletes. Hopefully with data through this device and more devices, there will be much more women athletes that I think it will help women in general to get some research and data overall.

Q. You talked about Coco, Badosa. When you play with younger players, when you say they're good, you have a good eye...

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Should be an agent, right (smiling)?

Q. What stands out to you? What do you see or feel when you're playing with these players that impresses you? What does a young person do to impress you?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: For me a lot of it is about how people carry themselves. That shows a lot. Everybody can hit the ball pretty well. I've seen so much talent who are incredibly gifted with their hands or with something else. But it's about how to find solution, how to go about a routine that is pretty difficult, the grind.

People impress me with who they are as human beings. Again, there's so much talent that is impressive for a little, but I think what the person brings behind that, the legacy that they can bring, what they can bring to the sport, what they can bring to inspire a new generation, that's what impresses me.

I always look for people who has more than just a good tennis game. I think that's really important.

Q. You've been outspoken about Ukraine and the invasion. Have you spoken to any of your Ukrainian counterparts here this week?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, I have. I have right away when things happened.

Whatever I say I know can be twisted in many, many different ways. People will have their own agenda how they want to spin it. But one thing that's missing in this world is compassion toward each other and empathy. That's something I feel I can offer to people. I hope that other people start to implement something like that because we're all human beings. That's the most important, is to take care of each other and help each other. That's what life is about.

I know it's a wishful thinking maybe at certain times, in times like that. But I think the core foundation of humanity shouldn't be lost in any conflict. I think the violence is never justified in any case. Never will be in my eyes.

I hope the compassion, the empathy, is something that we can grow more to avoid situations and conflicts happening in the world.

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