

BNP Paribas Open

Monday, March 14, 2022

Maria Sakkari

Press Conference



M. SAKKARI/P. Kvitova

6-3, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: Strong performance today. Can you talk us through the match a little bit.

MARIA SAKKARI: Sure. Yeah. I think, as I said on court, obviously Petra is a very tough opponent, but I came out of the court and I was feeling it today. I think it was a very good day for me and like not a good day for her.

So, yeah, I was just tactically playing the right way and serving really good, so I think that was the reason why I won that match quite easily.

Q. You talked about conditions when we spoke last. How pleased were you to kind of walk out there this morning? Pretty still conditions, very hot conditions, kind of perfect conditions for your game to really excel on these courts.

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah. I think it was good conditions for both of us, as we said last time. But my serve was one of the reasons why I think I was getting a lot of cheap points, and obviously whenever we had long rallies I was the one who was actually winning them.

It's just that I like playing in, first on, hot days. It's just better for my game and it's just, it suits better what I'm, my game and what I'm used to because that's the way, these are the conditions I grew up playing with and it's just good for my game. I guess the slow conditions are not good for many people.

Q. Is it dry like this in your region?

MARIA SAKKARI: No. I meant just the heat, yeah. It's not, unfortunately, it's not dry.

Q. What does it take for you to have a serving day like you did today? We've talked about these numbers before, but 24 out of 25 first serve points. What goes well?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, that's a nice thing you said because before the match I was actually thinking of that match at the US Open where I thought I served really well that match, but today was even better.

It's just that there are couple of things technically that if I do well, then I know that my serve can be very good, and I think today I was just focusing on these two things because I knew that Petra has a very good serve, so I have to hold, and then I'll get a chance to break her as long as I'm holding serves.

It's just that, yeah, as I said, these two technical things that I've been working on. I have them always in my mind. Sometimes it might not work because you can have a bad serving day, as you can have a bad forehand day or backhand day. I was lucky that today was a good serving day (laughing).

Q. A little bit of a different question. Things are opening up. People are traveling a little bit more. You come from such a beautiful country, so if you could tell Americans to go to one place in Greece, the mountains, the islands, Athens?

MARIA SAKKARI: Not the mountains. No.

Q. Olympus?

MARIA SAKKARI: Olympus is nice, but I think there are nicer mountains around the world. But you cannot find better beaches than in Greece, so I would suggest -- I always told my friends that they should visit Athens for a couple of days, not more than two days because Athens is a small city.

And then I'm not a huge fan of Mykonos and Santorini just because they are very crowded, but there are a lot of islands, like Paros and Diaporos. My favorite one is Syros and Crete. It's just that we have 118 islands, something like that, so it's tough for me to name one. But I would say Paros and Diaporos are very hot right now.

Q. It sounds like you've had some special moments there.

MARIA SAKKARI: Not there. I have more like special moments in Syros, which is an island next to Mykonos, and in Crete because that's where I spent last summer.

But, yeah, wherever you go to, like any Island in Greece, it's going to be very nice. Food is very good.

Q. Speaking on the service theme, can you compare, not just, not your serve technically, but just how mentally you approach your game differently now that you have a serve that can get you the cheap points, how much that changes compared to the Sakkari of two years ago, where maybe the serve was maybe more a little bit to get the rally going and you would be kind of more the physical player then?

MARIA SAKKARI: It's just now I think tennis has changed. There are so many girls serving well that in order for you to stay on top the level you have to have a good serve. We all know that I'm not one of the tallest ones, so for me was something that I really had to work on different ways and let's say Pliskova or Petra or players like Paula, that they're a lot taller than me.

But, yeah, I'm very, very good from the baseline. I think I would consider myself one of the best ones from the baseline, but I had to step it up, and I had to find different ways of winning points because there are also other players like Anett and, I mean, the entire top 10 right now that, they're also very good from the baseline, so I had to find different ways of just getting out and finding solutions during a match.

Q. You talk about Pliskova and Badosa and the taller players, but the world No. 1 doesn't exactly touch the top of the moon.

MARIA SAKKARI: Of course, but her serve is the most accurate in the game. Like, she can hit her spots better than even some of the guys, yeah, if I'm being deadly honest. So not speed-wise, but the spots.

Q. So then do you feel less pressure or more pressure now when you kind of take the court because I remember talking to Tom and he said that earlier on in your career there was that pressure because even if you serve you know you're going to have to play a five-shot, six-shot, eight-shot rally to win the point. Now these one, two points, do they relax your shoulders or now do you feel the pressure that you need to execute that?

MARIA SAKKARI: No, for sure they do, but there are games that I might not serve that well. There will be a

couple of games in a set that I won't be acing every point or I won't be making that many first serves, so then I just trust my game from the baseline that I can just out-grind the opponent and, it's just that I have a plan A and a plan B, which I think it's good and that's what got me to the top.

Yeah. I'm just now trying to be more aggressive and I'm working on new things and I'm always trying to improve. I'm trying to approach the net even more because tennis has changed so much that you have to, you know, try different things.

Q. You talked on court about not really thinking too much about rankings and those types of goals this season, but curious to know what for you do you want to achieve this season? What would make this a good season for you?

MARIA SAKKARI: I'm not going to tell you a ranking or a tournament result because I think we all have the same goals, like we all want to get to No. 1 and win Grand Slams or win tournaments like this one.

But what I want to do is just, I was a very good version of myself last year, I just want to become an even better version than last year. Then, if I can do that, then I'm sure that I'll achieve better things than last year. And then if it's this week, if it's the next week or if it's Madrid, Rome, Paris, Wimbledon, I don't really care, I just know that if I can do that it will come.

Q. You referred a few times to changes in the women's game. What do you think drives those changes? Is it technology, coaching, is it just the ebbs and flows of who happens to be at the top of the game any given season?

MARIA SAKKARI: I think that it's just that women right now are more athletic. No disrespect to the previous generation at all, but I think that like now girls are bigger, we're serving stronger, we spend more time in the gym. I think before, like 20 years ago, like I know from my mom, she never had a massage in her life. She was telling me that every time she was in pain she was just taking an aspirin and that was it.

So I think things have changed and it's just that, in 20 years time, girls will be playing different than now. It's just that in everything, not only tennis, things are changing, things are evolving, like technology is just I think one of the reasons why everything is just going pretty quick.

And even the guys, I would say that there are so many guys right now that they're big, that they're moving like they're short and it's just that there's no, there's not one

thing that I could tell you that has, that is the main reason, it's just that I think everything together is just becoming faster and quicker and stronger and, yeah, that's it.

Q. You seem very comfortable as a top-10 player, you settled into that role, it seems from the outside, quite well. There's obviously Anett, Ons, Paula, Ash, like players that you've known and have been lower ranked amongst. What is the vibe amongst that top-10 set right now, because it does seem that over the last eight months or so that you guys have set yourselves apart by being the top 10.

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, well I'm actually happy that this is happening because it shows that there is not a difference between us and the rest, because we all lose to each other and there are so many good players right now. Like if you go into a slam there are 25 girls that can win that slam.

It's just that the consistency has, is the key for like Ons, Anett, Paula, we all had very good seasons like last year and we did not have just one good tournament.

It's a nice group of people, it's a nice group of players and we all like each other. I think it's very competitive right now and I'm enjoying that right now that I'm one of them. And just being in that group of people it makes me very proud that I can actually tell myself that you're one of them.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports....