

BNP Paribas Open

Friday, March 18, 2022

Maria Sakkari

Press Conference



M. SAKKARI/P. Badosa

6-2, 4-6, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Congrats on the win. Can you talk about the match?

MARIA SAKKARI: Sure. Well, I think I started the match really well. I was very aggressive from the beginning and I was trying to find different ways to play her from the last time I played her in Mexico and I think we had the right strategy.

I took my foot off the gas in the second set. Obviously she started playing a lot better. She was more solid. But I'm very proud with the way I came back in the third set.

Q. Is that the most emotional you've been after a win?

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah. I mean, there are a lot of reasons, but, as I said on court, it might look silly to some people because it might look like I've won the title, but sometimes it's not about winning the tournament. It's just that some moments are very special for every player and today was one of them.

Q. Can you talk about your progression of self-belief when you're out there fighting and getting to that point where you know you can go for your shots and believe in them?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, I have to say that I've hit a lot of balls the last few years, so that plays a huge role in my confidence and in my game because, and of course, I mean, I think I've stated many times, but having a team like the one I have and having people that they constantly repeat that they believe in you and that they trust you and that they're just very proud no matter what, it just makes things a lot more easier.

At some point it's not only, it's also about you, that you have to believe in yourself, and I think, as I said many times, I'm turning 27 this year, which is not old, but not young as well, and I'm just more mature and things change in that age.

Q. You said at first that you took your foot off the gas in the second set. Can you clarify what you mean by that?

MARIA SAKKARI: Sure. I think I was just being a little bit too passive in a couple of games, then I tried to be more aggressive, but I was still a break down and it was tough to come back because she was playing really good her service games.

But then even though I lost the second set, the way I lost it was by playing aggressive, which helped me a lot on the third set.

Q. You've had a tough record in semifinals for awhile now. Wondering how much a win in a semifinal typically means to you?

MARIA SAKKARI: I'll be deadly honest that I never, ever thought about, you know, I have a lot of people telling me about, you know, and people around me telling about the semifinals and that I was not able to, you know, to get over this hurdle.

But I never, ever thought about it because I was always very confident and had a lot of belief that I would just get over it soon and it clicked, I guess.

Q. Can you talk about your final with Iga, facing her for the fifth time now?

MARIA SAKKARI: Sure. I mean, obviously we know that she has been playing very, very good the last, since the beginning of the year, I would say. She's one of the most consistent players this season and she has a lot of confidence.

We played each other last, I mean, in Doha and she was the better player that day and the better player in the tournament.

But you know, I'm pretty sure that you heard what I said on court, that I really respect her and I really like her because she's a lovely girl and she's very nice and whatever she

has achieved she really deserves it.

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But, you know, on the other hand, I just have full faith and a lot of confidence on my game and on myself right now.

Q. The winner of the final gets to No. 2 in the rankings. What would that mean to you to get that high?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, I still can't believe it. You know, it's eight months ago it was something that, you know, was impossible to get to, but now it's just a win away.

But I'm not going to think about it because it has been already a very good tournament. And of course ranking-wise I see myself improving every single week. So I'm just going to embrace the fact that I have a chance and I'm already just improving every week, which I think is very important for me, for my team, for my family, and of course for my country.

Q. Besides winning the last point what do you have to do to win the final?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, I think we will both go out and try and play very aggressive because this is how tennis is right now and women's tennis, in general.

But I just haven't really thought about the tactic yet because it's too early and too soon. It's something that I want to just start thinking from tomorrow because she has changed her game. She's not the Iga that was a year ago. She has been playing very, very aggressive and I was actually very surprised with that change when I played her in Doha. So I'll have to come up with a good plan with my team.

Q. The emotions on match point, were those emotions of tears of joy? Of relief? Of tension?

MARIA SAKKARI: Everything.

Q. But what was going into it? I mean, what were you feeling in that moment?

MARIA SAKKARI: It was more relief and more, because I was nervous before the match. I just wanted to, you know, overcome this challenge of making it to my first ever, I mean, Masters 1000 tournament.

So it just got to the point where I just, you know, I'm an emotional person and I just couldn't hold myself.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

MARIA SAKKARI: Thank you so much.

