

BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, March 20, 2022

Maria Sakkari

Press Conference



I. SWIATEK/M. Sakkari

6-4, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Can you talk about the match today.

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, obviously it wasn't my day. There's not much I can say about the way I played. I think there wasn't like a clear plan. There was a clear plan from my team, but I was not executing it the way I wanted. It was just not my day today, which I think sounds like something that can sometimes -- sometimes it can happen, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. (Question about level of tennis this week.)

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah. Well, I think I played some very, very good matches. I really believe I took a step forward this week, even though I lost today. As I said on court, it was a week that will have a special place in my heart. I know it sounds kind of weird because I did not win the tournament, but I felt like I improved as a player this week.

I'm just going to take that with me and move forward.

Q. What's the bigger disappointment for you, not winning the title or not executing the plan that had been given to you?

MARIA SAKKARI: I think executing the plan because if you do what you have to do, but then lose because the other one's better, then it's fine, I guess.

I clearly did not serve well. Yeah, my tennis was not there today, which is okay. But I think that next time I have to just, you know, try and find more solutions when I feel that way.

Q. What was the plan? How might the conditions have affected it?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, I'm not going to say the plan. It's a game plan. I'm pretty sure that I'll play Iga a lot of times.

If I tell you now, she'll know what to expect.

It was windy. Clearly it was windy. We were both struggling with our serves in the beginning of the match. Wind is never an excuse because wind is for both of us. That was irrelevant for my performance.

Q. Is that maybe the biggest takeaway from you, that you've taken another step, maybe have more faith you can get where you need to go?

MARIA SAKKARI: You said it all. It was actually the way you said it. It was a week that winning these players, overcoming myself in certain situations, was the key for me, to just believe more in myself and see myself in these positions and these later stages of the tournament.

I'm disappointed. I'm not going to hide that. I'm very disappointed I did not win today. But there are a lot of positive things that I'll take with me.

Q. On the match today, obviously execution issues. Was there anything that she was doing in particular that was preventing you from being able to execute the way you wanted to?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, sometimes she was -- I mean, I knew that she can get balls back, a lot of balls back. She was actually hitting very deep and close to the lines. With the wind, it was tough for me.

But I was not moving the way I wanted. I was not playing the way I was playing the last few days. It's tough for me to say. I don't think she played lights-out tennis. She played very solid. She did what she had to do to beat me.

I think her performance was better in Doha than today. It was just that I did not give enough. I was not a good opponent today.

Q. Was it tricky to recover from the emotions of the semifinals, kind of lock back into the final? This is uncharted territory for you.

MARIA SAKKARI: No, of course. It is something new for



me. I'm glad that now it's the finals and not the semifinals.

I think I had a little chat with Tom. He said that since we started working, I take baby steps. Looks like that (smiling).

Probably it's going to take me a little bit of time until, you know, I make that next step. But I think I'm on the right track, for sure.

Q. Does the ranking aspect give you a little bit of pleasure, that you now equal Stefanos as the highest-ever ranked Greek player at No. 3?

MARIA SAKKARI: Yes. When I think about it, I can't believe there's only two girls above me right now. I just cannot believe it right now. Whoever followed my steps last couple of years, they know what that means to me.

It's just that I'm very proud that myself and Stefanos have actually grown tennis in Greece. Having two players in that ranking position is something huge for us.

I'm going to say it again, but I'm very proud of myself this week.

Q. You made semifinals in Miami last year. Based on how you feel right now, do you feel like you're going to land in Miami and kind of hit the ground running, have that motivation or is it going to take you a little while to rebound from this?

MARIA SAKKARI: I think it's actually the best-case scenario -- actually it's a perfect situation right now because I won't go away mentally. I know in a couple days I'll have to play again. I'm used to that match - how do you say it?

Q. Rhythm?

MARIA SAKKARI: Rhythm, yes.

I think it's worse if you lose early, then you have to wait, you have to start again, practice. So I'm going to have a couple days off and I'll be ready for it, Miami, because I think it's a tournament that suits me.

Q. Iga spoke about your rivalry being a cool thing. Talk about what makes that rivalry special for you?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, she said we'll be playing for 10 more years, but I don't think I'll be playing for 10 more years tennis (laughter).

There's an age difference between me. But I believe what

she says. As long as I'll be playing for, there will be a lot of matches between the two of us.

I think, as I mentioned a few days ago, there are few girls that now have a different level and we're playing each other more and more. I'm excited for that. I'm excited because it means that if I get to play her every week, her or Ash or, I don't know, Sabalenka, Krejčíková, all these girls, it means that we're in a good place.

Q. How tough was it to serve in that wind?

MARIA SAKKARI: It was tough. It was tough. I think that I also had a bad service day today. It wasn't my, you know, day just winning easy points and stuff.

It was tough because one side you had to kick, the other side you have to hit more. You didn't know where to aim. But overall I think it was not a good performance. I would say the wind, yeah, was an aspect, but it wasn't just that, the reason why I did not serve well.

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