

# BNP Paribas Open

Friday, March 10, 2023

## Maria Sakkari

Press Conference



M. SAKKARI/S. Rogers

2-6, 6-4, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: With the rain delay, how did you reset and refocus to get back into it?

MARIA SAKKARI: I think that it was a good thing for me that we actually stopped. I had a little bit of time to reset and just think a couple of things. I just feel like I was very disappointed with my level up until we stopped with the rain, and played myself into the match in the second set.

So I think it was, yeah, it was crucial.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. How do you keep your focus and concentration when you have the rain but also Shelby was a bit injured? What do you mentally do in that time?**

MARIA SAKKARI: When it rains and we go back into the locker rooms, I just, you know, try to reset, try to speak to my coach and see what I can do differently, if I'm in a bad situation.

When the opponent is injured, then it's tough, because you don't know how bad is their injury, you know. It's tricky, because you don't know if you have to keep playing your game or just do things differently.

Obviously all I had in mind was just to make a lot of balls at that stage and not make any mistakes. It worked.

**Q. Is it also trickier because of empathy that you're seeing someone near you who is in pain? Can that even enter your mind in that moment, or you just have to focus on yourself?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I think I just focus on myself. That's what I try to do, because if you start thinking of a lot of things, then you can get distracted.

Of course it's never nice for anyone in this world to get injured, but when you're inside the tennis court and they

are still playing, then you just have to think of how you're going to win the match.

**Q. When you're facing those breakpoints in the second set, what were you thinking? What's going through your head?**

MARIA SAKKARI: You know, funny enough there are moments in the match where you're Love-40 down but you still feel like I'm going to get this back. It was one of those games that I felt like -- because I could see that my serve was starting to be good again, just, you know, hitting my spots.

I just felt like I was Love-40 down, but I had that belief that I'm gonna, you know, turn it around, yeah.

**Q. I guess two questions: Why was this night different from other nights in that sense? And also, what do you think you can do in order to get that feeling at other times when...**

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, this is not a feeling that you always get when you're every time Love-40 down. It's just that sometimes -- that's how I feel. Sometimes you have that feeling that actually you go up to the line, you're Love-40 down, but you feel like, I got this, like I'm gonna turn things around.

That's how it felt. It doesn't come all the time, but every now and then, you just know that it's there.

**Q. I'd like just to ask you a general question about tennis. Our sport has a lot of traditions, a lot of rules, some are good, some maybe not so good. If you could change one rule or one tradition in the sport of tennis, what would that be?**

MARIA SAKKARI: The medical timeouts (smiling). I think that sometimes there is a late notice from the player that -- it wasn't today the case. The girl asked, like in advance. I'm not talking about today's match.

But there have been matches where you just, you know, you sit on the chair for the changeover, and then suddenly



they remember to call the physio. Then it's just that the physio has to come all the way from the building. Sometimes it's far. Then it ends up being not only three minutes, but it ends up being eight.

So you get cold. I think that there should be a fine line with when you can call the physio, and maybe you should say it in advance unless, you know, it's an extreme situation where, you know, something very, like, unfortunate happens, like let's say when Zverev, you know, just, twisted his ankle. Of course, you know, you can't say that in advance.

**Q. So sometimes that really changes the momentum of a match?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, because you can be serving the next game, and it's not fair for the opponent to call it once you sit down and you only have a minute and a half, and then, you know, suddenly you end up having eight minutes. Because as I said, it's three minutes' medical timeout, but by the time they come, they see what's going on with you, and then it's just -- yeah, that's one thing I would change.

**Q. What does this kind of win against an opponent who had a strong record against you, what does having this win in your first match at Indian Wells do for your mentality going into the tournament?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I believe because it was, as you said, first match here in Indian Wells against a very tough opponent who plays -- I have to say she always plays good against good players. She has beaten some amazing players the last couple of years. She has beaten me three times.

I was scared of that match, because, you know, up until you beat someone, then you just feel like, what am I doing wrong and I cannot get a win over them.

So, yeah, I knew she was very dangerous, likes to hit the ball hard and big. I just felt like, okay, this time I have to do something differently. Obviously in the first set I didn't. I was missing a lot of balls. But then I just, as I said, and I said it on the court, my game is good when I'm rock solid from the baseline. That's how I win matches.

You know, I'm not a player where I hit 50 winners and 50 unforced errors. I just need to find that balance. That's how I play good. That's what I did today.

**Q. Did you earn your In-N-Out?**

MARIA SAKKARI: My physio doesn't let me eat In-N-Out during the tournament. And I regret -- I asked him to come

here, because now I cannot have my In-N-Out. No, I'm kidding. It's great to have him here (smiling).

**Q. You had such a great tournament last year. If you can recall just one memory from your time here in Indian Wells last year that was special.**

MARIA SAKKARI: On court or off court?

**Q. You choose.**

MARIA SAKKARI: Okay. Off court (smiling). After the match against Badosa, I think we were the last match here. There wasn't nobody out in the restaurant area. By the time, you know, I did press and everything, my coach went to get Cheesecake Factory, and he brought it back here. So it was myself, my coach, my hitting partner that time, my agent, and my sister. There was loud music playing and there was just the five of us, you know, just enjoying our food.

**Q. What kind of cheesecake?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I didn't have any cheesecake. I just had, you know, the food. Too many calories.

**Q. This is how we know how to get your physique. In-N-Out burgers and Cheesecake Factory.**

MARIA SAKKARI: No, that's not my diet, trust me (smiling).

**Q. I'm sure. So when you come here, is it generally good memories and good thoughts and good feelings? I mean, obviously it didn't end the way you wanted it to end last year. What goes through your head when you're in this setting?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I mean, I had a lot of people coming up to me saying that I'm the queen of Indian Wells. I'm like, What are you talking about, guys? I lost the match last year. Iga is the queen of Indian Wells now.

I just feel like I have a special connection with everyone here in the tournament and the crowd, and just I feel like it's a tournament where I just want to, you know, have and create a lot of memories until the end of my career. It has something very special. There are just a few tournaments in the year where they make you feel like that.

Obviously there is a little bit of pressure because I did well last year, but I just want to spend as much time as I can here, because it's the best place (smiling).

**Q. I'm just curious, you said there are a few other**



**tournaments. Which are the other ones?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Guadalajara for me is a very special one, not just because I played good end of last year from the Finals. I mean, the atmosphere there is just unreal.

Obviously Australia because of the Greeks. I really like French Open, but Indian Wells and Guadalajara are just a level above all.

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