

# BNP Paribas Open

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

## Maria Sakkari

Press Conference



M. SAKKARI/P. Kvitova

4-6, 7-5, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Another three-setter. How were you able to get it done against Petra today?

MARIA SAKKARI: I don't know. I think, as I said on the court, the first set and a half, I think what I said, I felt like an amateur was actually true. She was playing very, very good. I just didn't know what to do.

But then I just told myself just to keep trying and keep, you know, fighting. Eventually I started playing better, which was a good thing. It was a lifesaver, yes.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Speaking of things on court, did I hear correctly that you said your feet were bleeding?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Yes, they are.

**Q. Seriously, like what's going on?**

MARIA SAKKARI: No, it's just my nails. It's not ideal, but nothing bad, like I can properly play and run and everything, but it's not nice. Yeah.

**Q. The first set you were seemingly struggling to find your first serve in particular, but that seemed to kind of catch online a little bit more in the second set. Wondering how much maybe it helped you that you were landing more first serves in the second to kind of switch things around?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, she likes to make the points short. The more second serves you give her, she can, you know, hit hard and she can, you know, just make the points short like she wants.

So for me, I was struggling, you know, to find the right toss, and I was struggling, you know, to find the right -- I was not accurate with my spots. But eventually, you know, when I started feeling better, then everything, you know, just

started improving on the court.

Yeah, started changing a little bit where I was serving, because obviously I couldn't hit my spots really well. So then I started, like, aiming for bigger targets. Then at the end, I think that once I got comfortable, then I just went for them. It was a little better.

**Q. How do you like quantify or how do you look at this experience, these comebacks? You've talked about the fact that you felt you haven't really played your best in any of these matches. Is it sort of a strange, surreal experience? Is there maybe any lesson in it for you?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I mean, it is strange, but at the same time, I'm just telling myself, look, you're not playing your best tennis and you're still winning and beating amazing players. I mean, my draw was, I would say, bloody tough. I wouldn't take it in any other tournament (smiling).

You know, by just surviving and just finding ways, eventually I'm sure that my game is going to get better. I really want to see how it's gonna be when I will start feeling good with my game.

But of course I don't want to say that like I was playing shit and I won. That's not the case. That's also very bad for the opponent. I was just, you know, playing with different tools today and all these matches. I was not like playing with, you know, like that (hand over eyes). I was just trying to find different ways of playing.

**Q. So it's been a good problem-solving experience for you?**

MARIA SAKKARI: 100%. I think it's been a very, very good week. I'm gaining a lot of confidence out of that, because it's very easy when you win matches by playing good, but it's not easy to beat good players by playing this way.

**Q. Is it maybe also an indicator that your base level has risen, the fact that you can win without playing your best?**



MARIA SAKKARI: For sure, that's a very good point. I mean, it does play a huge role. Giving myself all this time to -- the last couple of years just playing a lot of matches and a lot of matches against very good players, it really helps my base level game.

Yeah, sometimes maybe I'm too hard on myself, just expecting too much on the court. Sometimes, you know, my base level is better than I think.

**Q. You seemed especially emotional after that win today on court. Can you describe what made this particular win so meaningful for you.**

MARIA SAKKARI: It was just that, as I said on the court, the fact that, you know, I came back from a set, break, was it Love-40 or 15-40? Who knows? Love-40 on her serve. It's a good Kvitova again. I'm not saying that in a bad way.

But last year for me, it was a lot easier than this year. She's now in a good form. Like for me coming back against her, now that she's playing good, now that she has beaten so many good players, it's a bloody good win. I just feel like the fact that I found a way today was one of the best comebacks of my life.

**Q. Speaking of your next match with Aryna, just curious to know, having watched what she did in Australia, do you take inspiration from that? What did you take away from watching her do that in Australia this year?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I mean, it was expected. It was gonna happen. She was knocking on that door for so long. She has been on the top 10 for -- Courtney, you know how long? Four years? 2019 when she won New Haven probably?

I mean, what is she? She's 25? She's been top 20 since, you know, let's say early 20s. She has been winning many big titles. I know she was struggling a little bit with grass, but then eventually she had a couple of semifinals. She's an amazing player.

I knew that she was gonna win a Grand Slam. It actually came, and I was very happy for her. She's a very nice girl. She's very fun to be around. It's going to be very, very tough, because she's feeling the ball really well.

**Q. In terms of facing Aryna on a bit of a slower hard court, but one that you are, at this point, pretty familiar with in the last two years, is that an edge to you? Is it not? Does the ball sit up do you think too much for her to take big cuts after big cuts? You have played**

**offensive-minded players quite a bit this week. How have you found it?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I think that Aryna is just very confident right now. She's seeing the ball like this (indicating). It's going to be tough no matter what surface we play on.

I think I heard the commentators saying today she only played, up until today's match, nine rallies over nine shots. That means that she's, you know, hitting the ball big. I saw that she was just hitting extremely, you know, hard today.

It's gonna be very tough. I'm not expecting, you know, a win like in Fort Worth. She's gonna be a different player, and I respect that. I'm ready for it. I'm just gonna try and improve my game at least 1%.

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