

BNP Paribas Open

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Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/E. Raducanu

6-3, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. How were you recovering after your last match and what were you feeling coming into this one?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I did great recovery and had an extra day. I'm feeling well, and yeah, I'm happy I was able to play great tennis today.

Yeah, but answering your question, I feel good.

Q. Emma hasn't played a lot of matches the last few months but you know what she's accomplished. How does that play on your mind as the match gets closer?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I wasn't thinking about that at all, to be honest. I'm happy that I'm able to focus on myself during these tough moments.

Yeah, she's an incredible player and she played great tennis today, even though she didn't play much matches in the past couple of months.

But still, I know that the level is there, and she can play some great tennis. But on those key moments, I was focusing on myself and things what I have to do on court to be in this match, and I think it's worked well.

Q. After you were very complimentary you said she played unbelievable and you felt like you had a lot of relief you'd come through in straight sets. What made you say that she played unbelievable?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, she fought till the end. She didn't give up in the last game. She was trying her best and during the match she was fighting for it.

Of course I was super happy that I was able to close this match in two sets, and the last game was tight. You know, like, I felt like the last game was kind of like key moment. If I would lose that game this would give her emotionally like

much more belief and confidence, and going to the tiebreak you never know. It's like 50/50. I didn't want that to happen.

That's why I felt a little bit of relief after I closed this match in two sets.

Q. I know you wouldn't want to have to save four match points in your first matches of the tournament, but now that you have, is it a little bit more relaxing moving forward into the tournament after an experience like that?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I mean, not really (smiling). I wish it would be like that, like you saved a couple of match points and you're done till the end of the week (smiling).

No, I didn't want that to happen, but still, I'm very proud of myself that I didn't give up in that situation and I was fighting like crazy, and I was able to win that match. It definitely give you more confidence moving forward. You know, like in this tough situation like today in the last game, I was just telling myself, like, listen, you came back after such a tough score, like, you can handle this one. Come on, just keep it going, keep fighting, and you will get this win.

Q. Seems like the biggest change in your game and overall in your career is that in the really big points and tight points when you're unleashing, the ball is going in instead of either going to the net or going out. I just wondered, what do you think has made the difference in that transition so that instead of there being errors on those crucial points now, it's like time after time, whenever there is a big point you come up with a great forehand across the court or a big serve?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I mean, I think the biggest change was that, like, mentally I changed a lot, and that's allows me to focus on myself on those points. You know, instead of try to overdo things, thinking, like, I have to do something extra during this point, it's very important point. I'm not putting that pressure on myself. Yeah, it's just another point. And I just have to keep doing what I was doing the whole match, and I'm going to get this point.

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So I think I'm able to focus on myself, and not overdo things, you know. Just playing the bigger targets, yes, still swing the ball, still go for big shots but in the bigger targets, for example. Sometimes I hit it not perfectly targets and it goes to the line, you know, so just kind of, like, changing my focus (smiling).

Q. After the match, you spoke with the chair umpire briefly. Did that have anything to do with the warning earlier?

ARYNA SABALENKA: After the match? Yeah, I just told her, like, Come on, you could just avoid that warning. It wasn't that bad. Yes, there was, like, one specific word, but it wasn't, like, I didn't forward it to her.

I was just, like you're pissed and you're just, Fuck this shit. I was just, like, Come on. You could have, like, ignored that. (Laughter.)

Did I really say that, Fuck this shit? I did it again. Well, fuck this shit. (Laughter.)

Q. You're supposed to curse in Russian.

ARYNA SABALENKA: No, I don't want to say that. Oh, my God. I mean, someone has to be stupid. I take this role. I'm a Barbie. (Laughter.) Okay.

Q. Some of the players recently have talked about the different balls that have been used, and you're playing a lot of matches because you're playing so well, I just wondered, have you found it difficult to adjust to the balls, or is it okay for you?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Wait a minute, I think we play same balls. No? We're not changing that much.

Q. Just in general, like sometime, different phases of the year.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Some players complaining?

Q. Yeah.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. Like, I can't complain. Seems that these balls working well for me.

I don't know. I mean, I feel comfortable playing with these balls, and I just can't complain about that. And it's okay if someone doesn't like it, someone likes it, it's absolutely fine. I don't know. No comments, I guess.

Q. You were talking about bigger targets on the bigger

points, but is that a realization you made in general about your game, that you have enough pace on your shot that you can hit more consistently the bigger targets and still hit winners?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, not every time, you know, like I'm focusing on bigger targets.

I feel like I just better understand the moments, like when I can go big and when I have to go in the big targets, you know, like. I think that's the biggest change that I have this understanding, like, where I can go full and where I have to step back and go to the bigger targets.

Q. This is the second season you started by winning a slam. Just curious how the last couple weeks were different this time than they were the first time.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, definitely I had a little bit more media, and I think we managed this better than last year.

But overall, kind of like the same (smiling). Boring.

Q. On a match point, Emma hit a ball that grazed the line, and I saw you hesitate for a moment. Can you say what was going through your head? Did you immediately see it was in, or what happened there?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Ah, I remember what you're thinking, what are you talking about.

I don't know. I was quite sure that the ball was flying, like, way wide, and I was just waiting the referee to call out.

But then it was in, and I was, like, Seriously? Why?

No, no, but it was great shot. I was a little bit worried if this shot gonna affect the whole match. But then I was just like, Come on, it's just one shot, just keep doing what you're doing and, yeah, stop thinking about that one mistake you made.

Q. Are you going to miss the Netflix cameras?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I will, actually. Enjoyed filming with them. They were super nice. I think they did a great job. I don't know. Seems that people loved watching Netflix.

So, yeah, I will miss the crew.

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