

# BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 16, 2024

## Maria Sakkari

Press Conference



M. SAKKARI/C. Gauff

6-4, 6-7, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Can you just, thoughts on the match and how you were able to hold off Coco.**

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, you know, I knew from the beginning it was going to be very tough. You know, a lot of things happened today. Rain delays. Obviously, you know, that second set could have been different, but I was thinking of that finish line too much, and then I was just thinking too much in that, you know, on how to close out the match. That didn't really help me. It freaked me out a little bit. I was too nervous.

But, you know, I'm very proud of myself that I kept my nerves, and then I just fought hard in that third set.

**Q. Does this give you a lot of strength going forward, having come back from that or gotten through that?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, well, David, you know, he just told me that I'm happy it went that way, because that will make you stronger (smiling). Obviously he said I know you would have loved to have won 6-4, 6-2, but, you know, we have to take the positives. And it's true, I agree with him.

**Q. Quite a match. So what's the tool in your mental toolbox that you called on and used when she reels off those games, you lost the match points, and then you're down a break in the third set, that gets you to keep going and not just pack it in?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I just told myself that the easy way out was just to give up in that third set, and I just wanted to challenge myself one more time and see what I can do after losing that second set.

I also kept telling myself that you're not the first or the last person that loses a set or a match -- well, a set from being match points down, and, you know, that gave me strength.

I just bought into the game style where I had to be more aggressive and, you know, mix it up a little bit. I think that I was too predictable in the end of that second set.

I'm just, you know, happy that I was able to close that out.

**Q. You talked about David. When you change coach and the season has already started, you need to be more careful, like, if he wants to make some adjustments in your game, even mentally, you need to be more careful because maybe you don't have the same time to digest everything as in the offseason?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Oh, for sure. It's always challenging to, you know, change coach. It's not the middle of the season, but, you know, we're three months in. And of course, that is our first tournament. I think we are doing pretty well (smiling).

Just as I said in my previous press conferences, that he was never going to come in and change things. I knew that he was going to come in, just we were going to work on things like we did those days, and it's just going to get better.

I'm just going to, you know, keep being very honest with him with what I need to work and he's going to be honest with me. I think together we can build something very good.

**Q. I imagine the rain delays made the match a little tricky. What did you do during the delays and how were you able to stay sharp when you came back on the court?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, no one likes rain delays. It really is not ideal, but I just had some food, took a quick shower, just, you know, stayed with my team. We were watching YouTube videos of Uncle Roger (smiling).

**Q. You were?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah. Then, you know, just went to warm up again, and yeah. Uncle Roger is the key of today's match.



**Q. Going into the final, the record, as you know, is 3-2 in your favor. How much significance does that have for you going into that final, considering that the last time you played Iga was here in '22?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, it's actually pretty crazy that last time we played was two years ago. I would say we are very different two years ago both of us. That's when her streak started or a few weeks before that.

You know, having that lead doesn't really mean anything, because she's the best player right now in the world.

I'm just going to, you know, try and keep that lead and stay, you know, two wins ahead of her, but it's just going to be very, very tricky.

**Q. Speaking on the matchup with Iga, obviously you have had success against her. Can you see a difference between the Iga that you had beaten pretty consistently early on in your matchups to the one that you're about to face in 48 hours?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I'm sure that I cannot really say much because we haven't played each other in two years. So it's always different to see that player playing against other players and not yourself. But, you know, one thing I know for sure is just that she's very good, I'm very good, and we're just going to fight and try and win that tournament.

Now, you know, it's something I want to start thinking tomorrow. But as I said previously, it's going to be very tough and very challenging, for sure.

**Q. Do you think you win that match six months ago?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Against Coco? No. Straightforward no (smiling).

**Q. Just the basic question of making a WTA 1000 final given kind of where things were at maybe even two weeks ago just in terms of the uncertainty, your game and all the three-setters you had to fight through to get here, what is the satisfaction of getting a result like this and how surprising is it to you honestly?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, we always say in tennis one day can change everything, but a month ago I was in Abu Dhabi, I couldn't hit a ball over the net, and now I'm just here in one of the biggest tournaments playing another final. It's just that, you know, those are lessons and those are things that you have to just accept the more you're on the tour that you're going to have some bad times, and then things can really change in a week.

Yeah, I'm just very happy that this has been the week that things have started changing, because you know how much I love this place, and I told myself that I want to stay here as long as I can, and here we are, staying until Sunday, Monday. Yeah (smiling).

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