

BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 8, 2025

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/M. Kessler

7-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, good performance, great crowd. Talk us through the match and about how your opponent played tonight.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, she played incredible tennis. I'd say she handled pressure pretty well. It was a great match, and just super happy to win this tough second round.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Novak was saying he found that the court, the bounce on the Stadium Court, was much different than I guess the other courts he had practiced on here and that it was really high, playing as high as some of the really high-bouncing clay courts. He was playing the afternoon. I realize you're playing the evening. Curious how you found it.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I think we were playing in different conditions, I'd say, and also probably played super-aggressive tennis. Yeah, but on the kick serve, the ball bounces much higher.

But I'd say that usually on every tournament the center court is a bit different than the rest of the courts. It's a bit slower, I'd say. I'd say that here outside courts are slightly faster than the center court. Yeah, there is definitely, like, some questionable parts of the court where the ball doesn't bounce at all or the ball goes really high up.

Overall, I'd have to say I felt pretty good on this court.

Q. There were a couple of moments throughout the match where you looked frustrated, but then your final point was maybe one of the best points or most fun to watch anyway of the match. Is the win more satisfying if you end on such a high note?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Did I look frustrated out there?

Q. You do occasionally, like any player, disappointed, frustrated.

ARYNA SABALENKA: It's just me. I wasn't frustrated. I was just like having little chat with myself.

I'd say the last point was probably the best point of the match. Probably, yeah, I remember only that point. I remember my serve and that point. I'd like to keep it like that. (Laughter.)

Q. I know you don't like to talk about confidence. It's not a word you like to talk about. How would you characterize your season overall and what would you say about your game at this phase of the season?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I'd say that it wasn't my best tennis in Middle East. But it was great tennis in Australia. Of course the final wasn't the match I'm really happy about. So I'd say it's a little bit like up-and-downs, but right now I start feeling better. I'm hungrier than I was in Middle East. I mean, it's way to go. It's tough to say, like, third month of the season, so I wouldn't rate my season anyhow.

Q. When you say you're hungrier now than you were last month, does that mean you had some time to get the love and passion back?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'd say that the final in Australia was really heartbreaking. It was very difficult to recover after that one, and Middle East I was kind of like, in my thoughts, I was trying to understand. I was always thinking about that match. It was, like, probably my mistake, but I think I had to go through, I had to realize couple of things. I had to kind of like step back and start everything over again.

Right now, I'm definitely feeling better and that final was in the past. Just good experience, great lesson, and hopefully it will never happen again (smiling).

Q. Often see a lot of players playing soccer and throwing a football around, but Jason has a Jiu-Jitsu background. I'm wondering, does he bring any grappling moves, anything totally different from what

other tennis players are doing that you're doing with Jason?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I'd say, yeah, there is some part of our fitness which is more related to Jiu-Jitsu. I would say the core exercises we are doing is mostly from Jiu-Jitsu, which I like. It's like the whole-body workout. I think it's working pretty good for tennis players.

But my coach is doing Jiu-Jitsu. Not doing really well. He always cramping in the first minute. But he's trying so hard. I just don't want to do that. The moment I realize how strong I am and I can do something, I'll probably go really crazy on my team. I think they don't want that, so they're not really letting me do that. We will stick to soccer and these games.

Q. Try and follow me here. There are four, you can say, key shots in tennis: Forehand, backhand, serve, return of serve. Who are the best in those four categories that you have faced?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Serve, I mean, on a good day, I'd say me. Forehand, Sinner. Can I go like that?

Q. No, WTA players.

ARYNA SABALENKA: WTA? Forehand? Backhand?

I just so much in love with myself on the good days. I cannot think about any players (laughter). Can you believe me?

Wait. Serve, Elena when she's in her good days.

Forehand... Andrei, can you help me right now? Oh, yeah, Madison.

What else? Volley?

Q. You said serve. Backhand.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Guys, you're just killing me right now.

Coco is good. Thank you, guys, for helping me. Anyone help? Just skip this question. I'm so bad.

Q. Return of serve.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Return? Oh, my god. Iga. Iga is good. Serve I said Elena Rybakina. Volley, Barty. Slice, Barty.

Q. Are February and March hard to get through

because there is no Grand Slam for a while?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah.

Q. Is that psychologically something to...

ARYNA SABALENKA: No, I'd say that Indian Wells feels like Grand Slam and, like, back to back Indian Wells/Miami. I love this tournament. For me feels pretty big. Psychologically I think it's not that tough.

Middle East, especially if you play really well in Australia and you win a Grand Slam there or you make a final, you just need a little bit more time to recover, to have some time off, to have a good preparation. And for the last three seasons I'd say that Middle East was pretty tough for me, physically and mentally both.

But March is good, and then there is Rome, Madrid, like beautiful tournaments. I don't know. I'm not thinking about -- I just love playing in those cities and the atmosphere is great.

Yeah, but if they would probably put it a little bit closer, like, and give us a little bit more time in between Roland Garros and Wimbledon, probably would be a little bit better. But, I mean, it is how it is.

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