

BNP Paribas Open

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/N. Osaka

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. A great performance today. What were you most pleased about in the match today?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'm super happy with the performance today, the way I brought variety on court, that I made her guess most of the times, and of course happy with the serves, so I felt like it was a great performance for me.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Being No. 1 obviously means that you have a target on your back and everyone wants to do the best to beat you. Is that the pressure or is that something that helps you to move forward?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I feel like it's -- I mean, of course it's a pressure, but at the same time, that's how I get better, because they go out there, they have to do something extra. I feel like that's the way they feel and that's what they do, and that's how I get better and stronger.

I feel like they do, like, extra, and I feel that on important points, they gonna drop the level. This is where I can step in, and this is how I basically, yeah, become a better player.

Q. Did you feel an extra intensity ahead of that match, given that you were playing somebody who has also won four Grand Slam titles and has also been World No. 1?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Not really. I don't think about this kind of stuff going to the match. I just focus on myself, focus on the game plan that I have, and this is what I learn with experience that you better leave this stuff outside of the tennis court, and you go out there and you do your best. That's what I'm focusing on.

Q. The only prior match you played with her, that was almost eight years ago.

ARYNA SABALENKA: That's insane. Can you believe for so many years on tour we only played once? But I feel like I started doing better when she got pregnant. I think that's why we didn't have much opportunities to face each other, and I feel like, pretty sure that we're gonna face each other many more times.

Q. How are you different from then? That must seem a lifetime.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I changed a lot. So many things happened to me, and I became a better player, better person, learned a lot about myself. I'm in better control over my emotions, I'm more experienced, I got some Grand Slams in my belt.

It's just like I feel I'm completely different person right now from when we played against each other.

Q. As World No. 1, I wonder how you think the sport is now in terms of gender equality, equal prize money, that kind of thing. So I just wonder where you think we are in 2026?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I feel like we're on the right path, we're moving towards right direction. We're being treated equally, we're paid equal.

Overall I feel like woman's sport, in general, improved in growth more, and yeah, I feel like we're going towards right direction.

Q. Is there anything you'd want to see changed, different?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, me personally, I'm happy with most of the things, even like scheduling, and, I mean, prize money and all of that stuff.

I would probably do a little bit better job on promoting our sport. I'm impressed -- not impressed, but I love the way ATP promote and how the marketing for ATP works. I feel



like this is the gap where we can improve and bring more attention and more eyes on woman's tennis.

Q. You'll play the winner of tonight's match between Anisimova and Mboka. You have played them both reasonably recently. What do you like about their games?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I love that they aggressive, I feel that both of them are fighters. I played a lot of matches against Amanda, just ones against Mboka, but it's been tough battles against both. It's been really aggressive tennis. It's been fun playing both. I'm super excited facing, doesn't matter who's gonna win the match.

Q. What were some of the tactical aspects of your game today? You talked about how you kept her guessing. What were some of the things you were trying to do to?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I was trying to change the rhythm and make sure that the ball comes back on her side different heights and speeds. So I think that was the key of the match.

Q. Is that something that's changed, particularly on hard courts, even since you last played Naomi? It feels like it used to be more about power hitting. Now, certainly the way you play, seems like you need to kind of bring that variety to bear even on a hard court.

ARYNA SABALENKA: No, but also we played at the US Open, which is much faster courts, different hard court. Here it's a bit slower, feels like the ball goes higher up. It's a bit different tennis here, so you have more time to bring that variety.

Q. Do you think that's changed in general over the last few years on hard courts?

ARYNA SABALENKA: No, I feel think it's always been like that, US Open being faster than Indian Wells.

Q. Just to pick up on scheduling, you said you're pretty much happy with the schedule. You're aware that there is this new architecture council that Jessica Pegula is chairing to look into the schedule. Is there anything you would change as a player who is quite good at picking your tournaments? You have missed a few thousand WTA 1000s, haven't you?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Scheduling tournaments? Yeah. Well, it's a tough question. Me, personally, I wouldn't have any tournaments in February after Australian Open, but it's all, you know, scheduling is such a tough thing.

I would just take off this mandatory situation, because if you go far in one tournament, you just physically, it's not good for health to go and play another one because it's mandatory. I would just take off this mandatory situation and then let the player choose where they want to compete and play, because if you make it far, the Australian Open, it's too soon to play Middle East swing.

So I feel like the mandatory situation, it's too much, like, we got to just low that number. It's too much.

Q. Does it make any difference when it's someone, like she used to be with your agency. You must have known her. Does that make any difference, playing someone...

ARYNA SABALENKA: Not at all. I just feel sorry for her that she moved from Evolve back to IMG. I don't think that's a smart decision to do.

I'm happy, I'm super happy that now all time that they were kind of like, how you say, balancing between me and the Naomi, now I got most of the time. I'm happy with that (smiling).

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