

# BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, March 15, 2026

## Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/E. Rybakina

3-6, 6-3, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, congratulations on winning this trophy.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: I'll start with the first question I think everyone has is how were you able to do that?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I have no idea. It was super hot. I was dying there in the tiebreak, but I also saw that she was also not feeling her best. So I was trying to push myself basically to the limit.

I'm super happy that in those last three points of the match, I was able to pull out really great tennis and get the win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Congratulations for everything that happened during this week. You are No. 1, 22 titles before this one, but you were so stressed during the final. Was it because of her, because of you, because of the tournament?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, as I said before going to this final, I am so tired of losing these big finals. I mean, don't get me wrong, players were playing incredible tennis, but still I managed to fight through and to get my opportunity, and I didn't use it so many times.

So in this final, the way I started the first set and then the first game of the second set, I was really not happy with that, and I was just trying to find something, find a way to get this win for myself, to feel more confident going into the next final. So I guess that's why.

**Q. Great match. Can you talk about two parts of the match? First, the 5-5 game in the third with the five break points, what were you feeling then? And then, of course, the championship point where you saved, I think she served 121 on that point and the backhand**

**winner?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, on that 5-All game, I was really upset each time I would miss her second serve. I felt like I had a lot of opportunities in that game, which I didn't use. I didn't feel my best, for sure, after that game.

But what I'm happy with is that in the next one I was able to pull out great serves to get that game and get into the tiebreak.

What was another one? Ah, match point.

Well, probably I have seen that match point at the Australian Open that she had, I don't know how many times it was in my face. I remember, like, okay, I was standing there thinking, okay, I've got to cover a wide serve, and I left T serve for her to ace it or whatever.

So lucky me, she served again wide serve, and I just covered that side. And doesn't matter how fast the serve is, I know that I can block it and I can return. So I got super lucky in that point.

And, yeah, I pulled out really great two shots, and I feel like that was the moment that gave me so much, I don't know, so much mental power.

Yeah, I got lucky. I got lucky in some points and unlucky then, so I guess it's all balanced (smiling).

**Q. So after the first game of the second set, you went and switched out your racquets. I was wondering, is there --**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Today? Second set?

**Q. Yeah. Did I count wrong? At one point you changed racquets. Is changing equipment because there is something you need different from your equipment in that moment, different strings, or is part of it just mental, you need a change and want to try something different?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: No, just because of the conditions.



It was super hot, and I just felt like the ball is flying crazy. I need to change the racquet just so it's a bit more safe. So it was just kind of like, I don't know how you call it, tactical move?

**Q. You talked the other day about trusting more in your ability to find kind of plan B. Seems like you had to go to plan C and also plan D at some point today.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, for sure (smiling).

**Q. When your game plan in the first set didn't work, what adjustments were you trying to make? How much of that had to do with, it feels like you kind of threw your more complete game at her. You showed her a lot of nuance today.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, as I said, you're right, the whole point was to have A, B, C, D, E, and blah, blah, blah plans. Today, A, B, C definitely didn't work.

So I had to just, I don't know, basically run there and put as much ball back at her as possible, and then when I felt more confident, I went back to my usual game, which is aggressive and dominating game.

So I guess I'm super, super happy that I was able to progress that far and to have so many tools in my game so no matter what happens in the match, I'm able to still find the small things that are going to help me to win the match.

**Q. You're flying out tonight. What does the celebration on the plane look like for you?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I guess a couple espresso martinis, probably, and Five Guys to go. Basically, that's why I'm never in good shape, because it's Five Guys and espresso martinis in celebration (laughing). Yeah, I guess that's it. Maybe a couple drinks just to cheer ourselves.

And that's it, because the schedule is really tight and we're on to the next one, and I cannot relax too much, because I'm defending champion there, and also, it's Miami. I love being there, playing there, so I want to do well there, as well.

So I will try to stay loose but focused. I guess it's, again, going into the balancing everything, so I will try to balance it the best way possible.

**Q. Congratulations. Clearly you know how to win big titles. You have won a lot of them. But as you say, you are disappointed that there are some you've missed. Is there something you have learned recently or in the last, let's say, 12 months about how to**

**refocus, reset, concentrate? Because it's one thing to say, oh, come on, pay attention, you can do this. It's another thing to do it when you're breakpoint down or championship point up. Is there something you have learned?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I guess it all comes with experience. With so many finals that I have lost, they also teach me a lot of things that basically the game is never done till it's done. So if it's a match point, you still have a chance to get back into the game.

So I guess that's something that I learned to be mentally strong no matter what. And even though I lost so many big ones and so many painful ones, I would say, I'm still able to go out there, and even when things are not going well, I'm able to stay focused and I'm able to just to fight for it.

**Q. After all that effort in that heat, how the hell did you have the strength left to hold that above your head?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: This trophy is so heavy. To be honest, I was so done. I had cramps after the match. It was so hot. The hot was like it was boiling hot out there, I feel like just coming from the court, you know.

I was, like, come on, I need the good picture (smiling). I've got to lift it up. Yeah, I took all of the power left and I did it.

**Q. 16 meetings now with Elena, so many big finals, you guys probably have the best rivalry in women's tennis. What are your thoughts on the intensity that it takes to beat her? What is it like with her off the court, actually? You guys get along pretty well, it seems.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, she's a nice one. I would say that she's the kindest one on tour. Yeah, we have been playing for so long so many matches. And honestly, I really enjoy it, even though I lost so many of them and really painful ones.

But still I enjoy it because it means that the final gonna be a show, it's gonna be great tennis, great level, and it's gonna be a fight, which is great for people to watch and also for me to become a better player.

So I really enjoy our rivalry. So, yeah, I like her as a person, as a player, and I enjoy these battles. But I really hope that I'm gonna win all of them from now on.

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