

Porsche Tennis Grand Prix

Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Germany

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Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, welcome back to Stuttgart. You have always done well here, especially last year. Just how much do you enjoy playing in this arena in front of the fans here?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'm super happy to be back here. It's one of my favorite tournaments. I always enjoy playing here.

I had really good success here. Hopefully this year I can do a little bit better. Just super happy to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Can you talk a bit about the last few weeks for you? You left Miami. Weren't really in perfect shape physically. Did you do something to recover or just rest?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I got a little injury there. We had few days off, so I had time to do some recovery stuff, some work with the physio, just rest a little bit.

Then I had a week and a half of preparation there in Miami. Yeah, that's it. Nothing much (smiling).

Q. Aryna, just on the topic of making two finals here in Stuttgart and being very close, I have to think it's one of those tournaments that you're highly motivated to try and win at this point. What is it about the conditions here that has allowed you to play so well the last couple years?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, courts used to be really not like fast but not like the rest of the clay courts. I don't know. Yeah, I think it was only about the courts. It was fast. But this year they change surface a little bit. It's a little bit slower, just a little bit different. I just hope I can do well on this surface.

Q. Like you said, clay is maybe not your favorite surface, but you had some pretty good results here and also other places but never reached the second week of the French Open. This is a big goal for you



this season. Can you see yourself as potential winner?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I never say that clay is not one of my favorite surface. Actually, I really enjoy playing on clay. I really enjoy this extra time.

Yeah, I had good results on clay court. So, yeah, I really want to be in the second week of the French Open. Also, I really want to do well here.

I really enjoy playing on clay, and hopefully this year I can do really well on clay court.

Q. What is about your drive lessons? When you finally win the car, will you drive yourself or will you have to hire a driver?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I will drive myself, of course (smiling).

Q. Last year, I have been told and you told sometime that after the Russian attack on the Ukraine you feel some atmosphere of hate sometimes. Has it changed now, or is it the same atmosphere of hate?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, yeah, definitely I feel a lot of weird looking at me and, yeah, probably hate from some of the people.

But now I just realize that I have done nothing bad to Ukraine and I did nothing. There is some people don't like me just because I was born in Belarus. It's like it's their decision, and I cannot control that.

Yeah, it's not the best feeling to be hated from people for basically nothing, but it is how it is.

Q. You said the court is playing a little bit slower. You weren't the only person to say that. Ons was also saying that before. Is that a good thing for you, or is that like less preferable?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. It's just different. Of course I would prefer to stay on the same surface that it used to be. But, I mean, I practiced few days on this



surface, and I felt good on this court. I feel comfortable playing on this court.

We'll see. We'll see by the end of this week if it's good or not (smiling).

Q. Just off of the earlier question about Roland Garros being a little bit trickier for you, I mean, because you have made semifinal in Rome, won Madrid, obviously two finals here, is there something particular about the Parisian clay or just the format of the tournament that makes it more difficult?

ARYNA SABALENKA: No, I would say I was just struggling with the Grand Slams before, and it was more about me really wanting to win a Grand Slam and me getting really crazy on matches than something about the clay. Because clay is good there, and it's one of the best clay courts there. I really like the courts, and hopefully this year I'll be able to do well (smiling).

Q. Two-time finalist here. Stuttgart definitely suits you. How are your German skills? Maybe you learned already some German words?

ARYNA SABALENKA: My skills on...

Q. Skills on German language.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Ah, German. Well, danke schoen for this question (laughter). That's it.

I'm really struggling with English. I'm trying to learn English and then like focus on the different languages (laughter). I wish I could speak many languages, but I think it's not my, how to say, not like weapon but not my strong part.

Q. The gap between you and Swiatek is getting a little closer spot in the ranking. She has many points to defend on clay. Is this something that is back in your mind or a goal for the season?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, of course I want to be No. 1. But I prefer not focusing on the points and all this stuff. I prefer to focus on myself, on my game, and make sure that I improve myself every day.

I just believe that if I'm gonna focus on myself and try to make myself better, the result will come. But of course I want to be No. 1, as every one of us does, you know.

Q. Just a question with what you said before, that obviously you did not nothing wrong. You also said that in Indian Wells. And stated quite a few times recently that you have nothing to do with politics.

Unfortunately like end of March there was a speech from the leader of your country where he was addressing the nation, and he mentioned you a couple of times in a contest of politics. You cannot control this stuff. That's quite sure. Just wondering if this is something that may hurt your image in the locker room with other players?

ARYNA SABALENKA: You mean that he mentioned me in his speech or what?

Q. He mentioned you in terms of he was saying how you played in Miami, the fact that you lost against Cirstea and this stuff. Considering that it was a political situation, just wondering if this stuff may hurt you, for example, your image in the locker room with other players.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, I'm pretty sure that it's not helping. I don't know. I don't know what to say, because again, he can comment my game, he can comment whatever he want to. Again, I have nothing to do with politics. I'm just an athlete, yes, from Belarus, and I'm just trying to do my best in my sport. Just trying to focusing on myself.

If Ukrainians will hate me more after his speech, then like what can I do? If they feel better by hating me, I'm happy to help them with that. They can do that. But the rest, like, if I could stop the war, I would do that, but unfortunately it's not in my hands and it's not under my control.

I'm just trying to stay less in the Internet so I'm not gonna see anything like that. I'll be able to focus on myself and on my game and not get too depressed about this situation.

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