

# China Open

Friday, September 29, 2023

Beijing, China

## Aryna Sabalenka

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Aryna, welcome back to Beijing and congratulations on being the new world No. 1. Can you give us your thoughts on returning here after so many years away and playing your first tournament as world No. 1.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I'm super happy to be back. Yeah, it feels nice to be back in China, especially as world No. 1. It's super special for me.

I just can't wait to start playing here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Just a few thoughts about your expectations for the tournament to come, whether you might be using that US Open final defeat to motivate you through the end of the season.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Sorry, I didn't get the last part. Didn't hear well.

**Q. Some expectations about the tournament to come, and then how you might be using the US Open final defeat to motivate you through the end of the season.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Oh, yeah, got it.

I mean, I'm not talking about expectations. Expectations always the same for every player, I would say. I mean, I'm still motivated.

I mean, yes, I'm a world No. 1 right now, but it's not just about become world No. 1, I think it's about finish the year as world No. 1 and stay there as long as you can. It was good that I was able to achieve this goal, but there is another goal. I'm super motivated right now.

The expectation here in Beijing is to bring my best tennis and do everything I can on court.

**Q. Just in terms of the last few weeks and recovering physically and mentally from New York, also just reflecting on kind of that very emotional run through**

**the two weeks to the final, then obviously No. 1, what was your biggest takeaway once you had some time and distance away from it?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, my biggest takeaway was that I need to learn how to finish the points on the net (smiling). We worked a lot on my volley game.

Yeah, overall, again, I got over-emotion there. I wasn't controlling myself. I was thinking all over the place in that second set. So, yeah, that's was the biggest takeaway.

I have to, no matter what, stick to the plan and just do what I have to do on court, just kind of like shut down all those thoughts.

Also, yes, I learned that I have to -- I mean, it's not like I don't know how to play volleys. I used to play doubles a lot. Just to be brave to go there, you know? Yeah, we worked a lot after US Open on that. Yeah, that's it.

Again, I took couple of days off just to switch off and forgot about tennis because it was a really tough, tough loss for me. It was super emotional. Yeah, took couple of days off, then I start working again.

**Q. In terms of coming here as the world No. 1, does it feel any different at all walking into the grounds as the No. 1 player in the world? Have you thought about what that means for you, having that number next to your name going forward?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, it just sounds still crazy. I feel like I have a lot of responsibility right now on being No. 1. I feel like kind of representing the tour.

Honestly, it's something new for me and still kind of like trying to, I don't know, just trying to understand if it's actually changing anything.

Overall it's not changing anything. Like, I was No. 2, now I'm No. 1. I'm still going to be there. I'm still going to be fight for it. It's not changing anything.

You know, I can say after my career, I can say that, Yeah,



I've been world No. 1. It sounds cool, right (smiling)?

**Q. In terms of your success in China, historically you've always played well during this section the season. Why do you think that has been the case in the past and what is your favorite memory before coming back here of playing in China?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I remember they used to call me 'Daughter of China'. It was really cool, I liked it.

I don't know, I guess I really like fried rice and that's why I'm doing well here. It's only about this perfect fried rice (smiling).

What was the second part of the question?

**Q. Favorite memory.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Favorite memory? I remember two womans fighting for my headband. It was interesting to see. I was just like, Guys, I'll bring you another one next time, just please don't fight.

That was the funniest memorable moment, I would say.

**Q. Been a long time for the Chinese fans back to the Asian Swing. I believe you must have received a good welcome in the last couple days. Any special gifts you get from the fans in the past several days?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I just got one gift from the fan. She gave me like a bracelet with the Chinese sign there. I guess I think it's like something for luck. So, yeah, this is the only gift I got so far.

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