

China Open

Tuesday, October 3, 2023

Beijing, China

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/K. Boulter

7-5, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Pretty tight match at the end. Can you give us your view of the match today?

ARYNA SABALENKA: It was always tight matches goodness Katie. She's a great player. I'm just super happy to win this match.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I'm just wondering if you think what separated the two of you out there today was how you managed to perform at the end of both of those sets. In the first set you saved seven break points to come back into it, then broke again crucially for 5-5 in the second set. Do you think that's what separated you two out there?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I think that's what's makes the difference. In the key moments I played a little bit better than her. I think, yeah, it was all about the last games in each set.

I mean, she had the opportunity. I'm super happy that I didn't give her easily those sets. I was keep fighting, keep trying.

Yeah, that's what makes the different.

Q. How did you manage to keep your frustration in check with all those break point chances that came and went, then also having to save the break point chances against you? What was going on in your mind? How happy are you that you were able to not let it get the better of you?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I know after last couple of years, nothing surprise me. I'm like, Okay, whatever. I been through so much, so it's okay (laughter). I know how to deal with all of this.

That's everything actually that was in my mind. I was like,

Okay, whatever, next point (smiling).

Q. I had a question generally about your forehand. Obviously it's a big weapon of yours; probably the biggest weapon of yours. Can you talk about maybe when you were younger and you were learning that shot, perfecting that shot, what were some of the key tips or coaching advice that you got in terms of how to hit it and what you needed to do with it?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. The problem where maybe was a good thing that nobody gave me so much tips how to hit it. I was just hitting, like, so hard, as hard as I could, wrong targets. And lucky me, after years I figure out the right target.

No, honestly you just have to be brave to swing it. Most of the girls, they getting tight and they, I don't know, blocking the shot and the ball usually goes wide. To have this weapon, you actually have to swing it. As more you swing it, like go under the ball, is less chances to make a mistake. That's the biggest tip I was giving.

Q. As you became older, once you became a tour player, had better coaches alongside you to help refine that shot, what has been the goal over the last five years of improving that shot?

ARYNA SABALENKA: It's a huge question. It's a lot of things.

First of all, like make more compact the motion. Not a lot of extra movement. It was the first thing. Then learn how to actually - how does it called - swing it, like play the lobs, not only flat ball, have this little under...

Q. Brush?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yes, brush the ball.

Then to have these different kind of shots, to be able to slice from the forehand, to make it top, to hit it flat, to go with the spin. 'Spin', this is the word. Spin, short balls, deep balls. There's a lot of things we've been working on in last years.



I'm super happy that now, after those years, I can see it's actually working on court well for me.

Q. It's been four years. I want to know your general feelings, after two victories in your pockets, about the courts, the weather.

ARYNA SABALENKA: In China, you mean?

Q. In China Open.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, like last time I played here, I don't remember that much people watching us. I mean, I wasn't famous maybe at that time (smiling).

The courts are really great. I would say it's really suit my game really well. The atmosphere is amazing. I don't know. It's been a while, like four years. I'm completely different person, completely different player right now. It's just different how I see things.

I feel so much support now here in China. Yeah, I mean, I really like the courts. I know better how to use these courts, how to play on these courts.

Yeah, it's actually great conditions here.

Q. The last time you played on an outside court. After your loss, you were just crying with your coach. Do you remember that?

ARYNA SABALENKA: After Kasatkina.

Q. After this year victory at Australian Open, I saw your fans posting the picture: That's the girl who was crying, now she's Grand Slam champion. Can you relive your memories here in China Open, all the Chinese tournaments?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, I used to play really well in China. I won two times Wuhan. At that time I was crying because I won my Wuhan title. I just came from the victory. I had to play, like, straightaway. Of course, I lost.

I felt so good yesterday, and today was the match. I feel like - I don't want to swearing, it's the only word you can say - but I felt really terrible and sad. I felt like my game is gone because of that match. That's why I was crying.

I remember this moment. It was really, I don't know, I felt like at that moment the whole world is just end. In that moment, it was tough.

I mean, everything we are going through is worth it. At the

end of the day it's worth it. We are facing tough challenges, but all these challenges making us really strong people, mentally, physically, however. We're really getting stronger.

I mean, after all those challenges I've been facing, being able to win a slam, yeah, that's the moment when you realize all your life you wasn't like wasting your energy on something, you were doing the right things.

So, yeah, a lot of things. These questions, I can speak a lot about this (smiling).

Q. Next round you will face Paolini. You lost last year to her in three sets in Indian Wells. Are you ready for...

ARYNA SABALENKA: Last year Indian Wells I wasn't my best shape. I was struggling a lot with a lot of different things. I would say it wasn't me last year at the Indian Wells.

I'm really happy to have this opportunity for revenge. I'll do my best in the next match. Yeah, hopefully I can get back this revenge.

Q. On the men's side, Daniil Medvedev mentioned the ball gets different after two games. Is it the same on women's side? What do you think of the balls?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, that's actually true. Like after couple of games, I cannot imagine what's happening with the men's game because the rallies are longer and the ball's getting even bigger.

Yeah, like today after couple of games, the balls were getting like heavier and bigger. Because of that, the game was getting slower. It's tough. It's actually tough conditions. I don't know, but it seems to work good for me, so I'm like, It's okay.

No, I would prefer actually probably different balls for this surface, yeah.

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