

China Open

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Beijing, China

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



An interview with:

ARYNA SABALENKA

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, welcome back to the China Open, your first tournament since winning the US Open. How are you feeling? How is your physical form at the moment?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'm super happy to get back to competing. Yeah, I had some days off after US Open. I had I think good preparation before the Asia Swing, so I'm excited to start playing again.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Did you get an opportunity and as much time as you needed post US Open to celebrate, to soak in what you had achieved, and also - if it's possible - to get it out of your system to get back to business?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I think I still need some time to realize what happened. I think I just going to look back at the season after I finish this season. Right now I just want to keep going till the end without, like, looking back and thinking.

But, yeah, I don't know, I think I had four or five days off. I think it was enough to celebrate, to have fun, to recharge, reset, and start everything over again. I had good week and a half, I guess, of preparation before the Asia. So, yeah...

I think it was enough time. Of course, I would take more break, but I just couldn't.

Q. The No. 1 ranking is now within sight, within reach. How important is it for you to be world No. 1 at the end of the year? Obviously we have no idea what it feels like to be called 'the best tennis player in the world'. What does that feel like?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Hmm... Well, yeah, of course, that's one of my goals, to finish the season at world No. 1.

I'm not trying to focus on that. I'm trying to focus on my game. There is only three tournaments left. I'm just trying to bring my best tennis on court.

After the season, I'll see if it was enough to finish the year at world No. 1 or have to improve something else to get to world No. 1.

To be called as best player in the world, that's really means a lot. My whole life, I've been working so hard to get to the top hundred, then top 50, then top 10, get to the top two. If one day I'll be world No. 1, to be called best player in the world, that means everything. It's good to know that you've been doing the right thing, all of that, hours of training, wasn't a wasting of time.

I think as the best player in the world, you inspire young generation. For me, that's been the main goal, always been the main goal for me. That would be really, really cool (smiling).

Q. The Asian Swing in general, you've played well in China before, what is the significance to a player of this stretch of the season? It's a lot of ranking points.

ARYNA SABALENKA: True.

Q. The ranking points stay on your ranking for next year. What is the importance of the Asian swing to a player right now?

ARYNA SABALENKA: As I said, it's a big tournaments here. Also it's important to do well here before the WTA Finals, to have these matches in your pocket before going to the Finals.

I think between Wuhan and Finals is like three weeks of gaps. It means if you're not reach like last stages of the tournaments here, then you have really bigger gap in between, which is not so good before going to the last tournament of the year where, like, every match is high-intensity match.

For me it's really important to do well here so, like, I just better prepared for the Finals and I have more matches in

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my pocket before the last push of the season. So yeah...

Q. You talked about the China season. Good food is one attraction to you, especially Chinese fried rice. Do you have anything you want to try this year, any other Chinese elements that attract you here?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, yeah. I like fried rice. I really enjoy fried rice here in China.

Last year I got stomach sick here and I felt really bad. At the French Open, I was struggling with my stomach. I just like getting back to the normal, like, working on my stomach right now.

I wouldn't try something new. I don't want to put that experiment on my stomach. I would just stick to my routine here in China.

Q. You said that China brings you a lot of luck. You have a lot of Chinese fans. Do you have any special feelings when you come to compete in China?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, it's always going to be in a special place because I won so many tournaments here in the past. I remember being called like the Daughter of China.

Yeah, as you said, China brings me luck. It's really special feeling coming back here, like, after so many good memories in the past.

So, yeah, I love playing in China. It's always, always good memories here.

Q. Have you seen your draw? You will have a chance to compete against Zheng Qinwen in the quarterfinals. Two meetings this year so far. What do you look forward to in this match?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I think she's in another part of the draw. I think she's in another part. She said I have a chance to compete against her in the quarterfinals. I think she's in the bottom draw and I'm in the top draw.

Okay, well, we had really two great matches this season. It's always tough. It's always tough facing her. Would be so cool to play against her here. Even though I know the crowd going to be on her side, I believe I kind of like know how to deal the crowd being against me.

Yeah, will be cool face her one more time.

Q. New facilities have been upgraded in the China Open. What about the gym, the break area? Do you

find anything different from last year, any new experience for you?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, yeah, there is so many upgrades in the locker room, in the gym, players area being upgraded, renovated.

When I first came, I was like, Oh, wow this looks new. It's beautiful, kind of like modern looking. I like it. It's kind of like fresh feeling.

Every year we play the same tournaments. When they upgrade the facility every time, it just makes me feel like I'm playing another tournament, it's something new, it's fresh.

So, yeah, I like it. It's more comfortable, more convenient. Yeah, I like it.

Q. I'm eight years old. I want to play tennis. Can you give me...

ARYNA SABALENKA: Okay, advice. For eight years old, advice (laughter)?

I mean, if you really like the sport and you really want to do well, just work hard, listen to your coach, to your family, and try to do your best on each practice. If you play points or whatever, just try to be the best every time.

Yeah, you're going to be there one day.

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