

# Yarra Valley Classic

Monday, 1 February 2021

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Serena Williams

Press Conference



S. WILLIAMS/D. Gavrilova

6-1, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Talk us through that match and how important it was for you to get a good match out today on the Melbourne Park courts.**

SERENA WILLIAMS: It was a good match for me. It wasn't easy at all. It was lots of rallies and lots of movement, and she's from here, so she obviously always plays hard. So it was really good and it felt good to clinch that in the end.

**Q. Many athletes from other sports have talked about how as they start playing again in front of crowds they didn't appreciate how much they really depended on the crowds for energy until the crowds were gone and that even supporters and hecklers alike are helpful in some way to their performance. I was wondering if you found that to be so and maybe have a new found appreciation for that element of what you do?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, I feel like the crowds are -- it's awesome because for a moment in time you're there with just you and your opponent and everyone's there just to see you and it's pretty special feeling.

**Q. You came here in 1998 to Melbourne, a long time back. Do you still get the same drive and the same excitement coming back here again so many years later?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, I definitely get a lot of the same drive. Definitely not the same excitement because there's nothing like the first time going out there and just seeing everyone and just being around people and things. But it's pretty close. It's super exciting every time to come out and to be part of something so special.

**Q. I want to ask one great athlete about another great athlete. Can you tell me what you think the most impressive thing about Tom Brady's career and long list of accomplishments are and why that he's lasted this long, that he walked away from a system**

**in new England after 20 years and found success so quickly or is it something else?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: The guy is a champion, and I've said it since when he beat Kurt Warner back in, I want to say -- what was that, 2000 maybe? It was that crazy Super Bowl. He was the underdog and they beat the Rams. Clearly I'm a football fan (laughing). Yeah, so it was a crazy win, and I always thought, this guy is impressive.

I always thought that throughout the years and I think everyone else kind of knows that. I mean, they didn't know that -- few Super Bowls ago, everyone knew that. Now they know it even more. To do what he's done outside of New England and to come into Tampa, I mean, he just should have come to the Dolphins, really. Seriously, Tom, what were you thinking? But it's still Florida, so it still counts.

**Q. Do you think he has the ability to make his teammates play better, as well?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: I was actually talking about that the other day after watching the game. I said, it must be so inspiring to be either a wide receiver or a lineman for him, because -- or just on the team in general, because it's like this guy has won so many rings. He obviously knows what to do, and to have that inspiration, they must be so fired up for every game. Especially post-season, they must be like, oh, my God, this is our chance, we're with the greatest and we want to win and we have the best opportunity to win. So I just think it must be so inspiring for every player and even the coaches in that whole arena. It's amazing.

**Q. Not that anyone can predict the future, but assuming you stay healthy personally, how much tennis do you think you'll be able to play this year?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: This year?

**Q. Not so much you personally, but in terms of the state of the world and stuff as you think about the future.**

SERENA WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah. I don't know. I don't know. It's very hard to say. Everything looks good here so far, but it's winter in the rest of the world and it is not

looking amazing, but hopefully things will get better with the vaccine.

**Q. You were just touching on the aspect of crowds. Can you address the point about a racquet making contact with the ball and how much a player has to hear that when you see the difference between a stadium having a crowd and not having a crowd?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, I don't think I've ever heard it, but yeah, it's definitely interesting. I think I hear it mostly in film, not necessarily live, because you're so focused.

**Q. After Hank Aaron died, Howard Bryant tweeted out that in his last conversation with Hank, Hank asked him like when do you think Serena's going to win her next major?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: No way.

**Q. And I was wondering what that's like for you. You live in your little bubble, but to know that the greats in other sports are following you, and really of all the things he could have talked to him about, that was what he chose.**

SERENA WILLIAMS: Wow. That's wild. That gives me chills. Oh, that's -- I wish I could have done it when he was around. Growing up, going to school and reading books about him and I never in a lifetime would have dreamt that I would have been on his mind. So that's really amazing.

**Q. Had you met him before?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: No, I never met him, but he was obviously a legend growing up, for me, being a first in so many things, and I always thought he was incredibly cool, just legendary status. So it was a great loss, it really was. I was so sad to see that happen. But his legend will live on, and yeah, many people will always know all the wonderful things he did for sport.

**Q. Looking back towards the preseason a little bit, everybody that I've talked to so far has had different approach, given that it was a longer window, but at the same time a few curve balls thrown in there with when you would get to Australia and things like that. I'm curious for you, in the planning, how different was this preseason leading up to Australia for you?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: It was great for me because I needed the time, because I couldn't practice because of my achilles. I needed every time -- I don't think I would have been here if it was during the regular season. So whew, that was an unwanted blessing, I would say, but it was much needed for me. So I definitely took that time to recover and to just do the best that I can, and yeah,

and so now it's a lot better.

**Q. Were you able to kind of have a regular preseason then in terms of the time, whereas like if the AO was in January you probably would have been crunched, but did you get like a regular block?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: I did. I was able to get a regular block. Honestly, not as much as I would have liked, because I needed to take -- achilles are like the worst thing honestly, oh my goodness, I didn't realize it would be this long. But, yeah, so I definitely was pushing the limits, but I'm here.

**Q. Looking ahead you'll play Pironkova next, obviously you guys played at the US Open. How important is that match for you in New York in terms of how you plan to prepare for her this time around?**

SERENA WILLIAMS: It's important for me just to see what she did and what I did and what we can both do better. I'm always rooting for her, she's like such a great story. Yeah, but, so, yeah, she's just a good person.

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