

# Gippsland Trophy

Wednesday, 3 February 2021

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Simona Halep

Press Conference



HALEP-GAVRILOVA/Mattek-Sands-Dabrowski

7-6, 2-6, 10-2

THE MODERATOR: Talk us through your double match day today.

SIMONA HALEP: Well, the double was not easy, because I don't really feel the game. But it was fun. Dasha is a fun girl and it's always nice to play with her. We have two matches already. We played well, and I'm happy that we can go through.

**Q. The singles with Siegemund, 2 and 4, generally happy with everything in today's match?**

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, I can say I'm happy. A little bit in the second set at the beginning I was with no energy, but then I stayed focused. I know that, I knew that she's gonna change the rhythm a lot. She did that, many dropshots, but I was ready for it.

I feel like I played much better than the first round.

**Q. Up against Alexandrova, are you a bit surprised that she got, not taking anything away from her, but that she got through instead of Iga Swiatek?**

SIMONA HALEP: Well, you never know, at the beginning of the year it's always tough, so we cannot say one player has to win, is favorite, because they don't have matches and it's tough to find the rhythm.

But I'm sure it was a good match over there. I didn't watch any because I had to play, but Alexandrova is a good player, so it's going to be a good challenge.

**Q. You have had quite a bit of court time between the singles matches plus the Adelaide exhibition and then the doubles matches. So what level of happiness are you with where your game is right now?**

SIMONA HALEP: Well, I'm really happy with the way I play. As I said at the beginning of the season, it is never easy so I have to find the rhythm but I am getting better day by day. Also the match with Ash in Adelaide helped me a lot.

I'm a little bit sore, I have to admit, but tomorrow is a new day and I just want to go there and to try to play better. Doesn't matter the result, I just want to play better.

**Q. Is there any concern at all in terms of the amount of time you've been spending on court with the Australian Open right around the corner or are you not concerned?**

SIMONA HALEP: No, I'm not. I'm happy that I can play matches. That's why I wanted to play doubles in this tournament, because I need matches, official matches. It's always different than a practice match, so I prefer to get used to it during the tournament.

**Q. Then just on Alexandrova, you said she's a good player. Can you talk about the challenge of playing her in the quarterfinals?**

SIMONA HALEP: She's playing flat, as I remember well, flat and very deep. So it's gonna be tough to return the balls, but I have to play my game. I will focus on myself, as I do every time, and to believe, because it's a new match, a new day, and it's a good opportunity to win another match.

**Q. In the course of practicing on the courts and things like that in Melbourne, and I know you were in Adelaide for most of the time so you have only practiced on these courts for a little bit of time, but how much did you have to make any adjustments to your game, given how you were feeling with respect to the speed of the court and the way the ball was moving?**

SIMONA HALEP: Well, normally I don't do changes like that. I try to adjust myself as much as possible during the matches, because as I said before, during the practice is not the same so you don't feel the ball the same.

But, yeah, I feel that it's much faster here than Adelaide. The conditions are different. But I got used to already, so I'm not thinking that much about that anymore.

**Q. Away from the courts, have you had a chance to wander the Melbourne streets? Does it seem at all changed even though life has returned to a measure**

## of normalcy here?

SIMONA HALEP: Well, I had the chance only Saturday to walk a little bit outside in the city. I saw so many people. I was happy, because in Europe it's, every city it's almost empty.

Yeah, it was a great feeling to see the people relaxed here, so not that many people with mask.

I am back to normal life here, and I really enjoy the time.

## Q. When you return home, what will you likely return home to, what kind of environment? Are people masked and basically locked down, or what is it like?

SIMONA HALEP: We are not in lockdown anymore. We have been about few months last year, but the mask is mandatory everywhere. The restaurant just opened because the whole year were closed.

So the life is not easy back home, but I try just to, you know, to take it as it is because for everybody it's tough. So I don't complain. I just want to try to see the positive part as much as possible.

## Q. Just asking a few players about Australian life. You have been with Darren for so long, so obviously a lot of things he says may have rubbed off onto you, calling you Simo and things like that. What about other words that you have picked up over the years and foods that you tried over here?

SIMONA HALEP: Well, the word "mate" is like a friend, no? Yeah, he's using it a lot. "Well done, mate," something like that. I have tried Vegemite, but I was not that happy with it, because I love -- I love chocolate so Darren said you have to choose. You cannot combine.

So, yeah, other things, I just pick from there. The relaxed mode that he has always. When you have a tough day, you just have a beer and tomorrow it's a new day. So I have that in my mind, and it's helping me every time I struggle (smiling).

## Q. Any other words, like "crikey"? Or "g'day"?

SIMONA HALEP: "G'day," yeah. I always tell Darren when he stays home with the family and he comes back in our team, he's talking too fast and he has to slow down. Yeah, he doesn't use so many words in Australian English because I don't get them and I tell him, Just slow down.

## Q. Have you tried kangaroo?

SIMONA HALEP: I have tried but about six years ago. A little bit. I'm not very open to the new stuff, so a little bit I tasted, yeah. It's good.

## Q. The extraordinary measures that Tennis Australia went to bring everybody here, and the extraordinary measures that Australians went to to contain the virus, how feasible do you feel it is that we can have an Olympics this year? Do you have concerns about ten times as many athletes converging on Tokyo in a few months?

SIMONA HALEP: Well, you guys here did a great, the best job, actually. You are the best country in the world that has no cases. You are so disciplined. And also, you respect the rules 100%, and that's why you are where you are.

Yeah, I thought before coming here that all the rules are very tough, and I was thinking very serious about 14 days' hard lockdown if there is a case in my plane. I knew that, and I was really, yeah, it was a tough decision.

But I was lucky enough to not having positive case in the plane. Would be great to have Olympics here if you stay with zero cases, and your rules are so much respected. Yeah, there is a good chance to have the Olympics here. It's so nice.

But also, I think in Tokyo they will have a good job, they will do a good job there. They have to be ready for everything, and so many players, athletes, actually, going there is never easy.

So don't know actually what is happening next week, so it's too far to think about Olympics, but I really want them to happen.

## Q. Recently you say that today you played better than the first round. What specifically did you improve?

SIMONA HALEP: What I improved?

## Q. Yes.

SIMONA HALEP: You cannot improve much in one day. You just have a better feeling of the ball. You are more confident on the court. I moved much better today, so I got used just to the rhythm of the match, and that's why I feel like I played better than first round.

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