

# Brisbane International

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Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

## Aryna Sabalenka

### Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to Brisbane. You have been here for a couple days now. Talk us through your preparation and what you have been up to.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'm happy to be back, been a couple days of tough practicing. And, yeah, went on the river with the tournament, did some fun stuff as well. Just cannot wait to start playing here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Welcome back to Australia. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you get ready to get on a plane and heading to Australia?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Lots of excitement and a lot of great memories, to be honest, and hope that I can do well again.

**Q. What is it about Australia? Is it the surface, the heat, the people? Is it something else?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Definitely not the heat, but people, yeah. I think people. I think the atmosphere, like here, it's always full crowd. Everyone is really engaging a lot with tennis. Also Melbourne, the support there is incredible. I think people.

**Q. You have come here a little bit different than 12 months ago. You were the two-time defending champion. This time someone pipped you from last year. Does that give you a fair amount of motivation for this trip?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I'm always super motivated when I come to Australia. I love playing here. I want to stay here as long as possible.

Of course remembering last year final, I really want to do just a little bit better than I did last year (smiling).

**Q. You're going to play doubles with Paula this week. A couple days ago she said that the injury from last year was one of the most complicated moments of the career. I would like to know how it was for you seeing a close friend doing that, suffering a problem that she, like, carry on like a couple of years ago. We all know that Paula is a**

**fighter.**

ARYNA SABALENKA: She is a fighter.

**Q. How you see her now? What is that relationship that you have between her and...**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I mean, SabaDosa is back, so it's going to be a lot of fun on court. It was tough time as well for me to see her suffering, and I have always been there for her.

We spoke a lot. I tried to give my best advice to her, and, I mean, I have always been there for her. If she want to talk, I was there. If she needed something, I was there. I gave her contact of a good physiotherapist.

Yeah, I have been a great supporter, and I really hope that she can -- not hope, I know she's going to get back on her level. I just want to make sure her body is protected and strong and ready to go.

**Q. Brisbane has become a pretty integral part of your preparation for the AO and when you come to Australia. What does this tournament mean to you?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: It means a lot. I always enjoy coming here. I always show my best tennis here. I enjoy playing in front of all of the people, and it's a great place to continue the preseason, in a way, and also get some matches.

I'm really excited to be back and really hope to do well again.

**Q. It's a pretty hot field. It's always a pretty good field here, but a pretty hot field this year in particular. What do you think about that? 7 of the top-10 women?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, it's a tough draw, a lot of great players. I love to see that. It's a lot of matches before hitting Australian Open. It's great tournament, and I'm happy to see a lot of great players choosing this tournament to come.

**Q. You talked before about the crowd support at the AO, pretty boisterous and rowdy crowd at times, especially last year there was a bit of discussion whether that was a little bit over the top, a little bit**

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**too much. Do you enjoy that? You get a lot of support probably...**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I love it. As long as it's for me, come on, bring it up and go as loud as you can. I'll be enjoying it (smiling).

If it's against me, then it's a problem. But so far I've been okay with the crowd.

**Q. We heard from Maddie before. She says she doesn't feel any extra pressure or expectation coming to Australia as the reigning champ. Can you talk about what it's like now...**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Madison, you mean?

**Q. Yes. Can you talk about the difference between coming back to Australia as the Grand Slam champion versus trying to reclaim the title?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Honestly, there is no difference. I just, every time -- doesn't matter which tournament it is. Every time, if I'm defending champion, if I lost first round last year, the goal is always the same, to bring my best tennis and to improve my game, and honestly, that's it. That's how I take it. I always just focusing on myself, on developing my game, and making sure that I'm 100% there. That's my goal and focus every time.

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