

# Australian Open

Friday, 19 January 2024  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Marta Kostyuk

Press Conference



M. KOSTYUK/E. Avanesyan

2-6, 6-4, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Marta, congratulations. You're through to the fourth round. How do you feel?

MARTA KOSTYUK: Pretty good. Was very, very mental match today. She was closer than I thought to the win. I really grabbed it out of her hands. Very, very happy with the win today.

I don't think it's my best performance, but I think the win counts. The win counts, so...

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Round of 16. First time here in a little while. What does it mean for you to make it back into the second week? Also, just the way that you've had to fight through these matches this week, your fighting spirit and stuff like that, how do you gauge it? Were you teetering, or is this how you wanted to be able to compete?**

MARTA KOSTYUK: I think I can play very different game. I think I am trying to find the right balance between aggressive and defensive game because there are players that are just so solid. It's not really possible to beat them just by playing very aggressive. So I feel like it's my strength, but I never really recognized it before.

Yeah, of course, I wish I played more aggressive today, but the pressure was there because I wasn't an underdog player like against Alize, and I didn't know what to expect. It was not easy. As I said, it was a very mental match.

Generally I prefer to be and I'm always working on my aggressive game rather than my defensive, but I feel like there are just matches where you really need to just get by and push through.

Yeah, I'm very happy I live this possibility for myself because before I felt like if I don't play aggressive enough, it's a failure. It's not easy to operate this way because I'm definitely not an aggressive player like

Rybakina or all these big hitters. It's just not my natural game. It's not my identity. It's not who I am.

It's been a long process and a lot of work has been done, but obviously very happy to come back to my personal record stage - how do I say - after almost three years. It feels good.

**Q. When we were here last year there was a big fundraiser for Ukraine. People were talking about it a lot. Now I don't think I've heard anyone barely say the word. Do you think people in tennis have kind of forgotten about the war?**

MARTA KOSTYUK: Unfortunately, yes. I respect journalists, but there are some that I really don't like. I think it was a way of not really lightening up the situation in Ukraine, but rather it being like breaking news all the time. So they want the drama. They wanted news. They wanted all this heating between players and everything.

The war is still there. People are still dying every day. I still don't understand what all these players are doing here.

Nothing really changed in my world. I feel like in general it's a lot of processes happening to come to this point where people forget about it because, yeah, people get used to it.

I understand that everyone has their own issues, and everyone is focused on their thing. I think I'm here to remind everyone all the time that it's still on, and it should be stopped. It's not normal that it's happening.

My whole family is in Kyiv right now. My mom sends me videos when there are missiles flying over their house. I watch this. To me it's incredible that it's still going on, and it's been almost two years.

Yeah, sorry, I have to quote this. There was one good thing that David Cameron said that 'It feels like it's the 1930s again, and even Putin can't win.'

It really feels like everyone is just... I feel like west tries to silent everything down, like to talk less about it, to not escalate anything.



But in reality, the reality that I'm living in, is everything is very far from being over. We are not in a good -- not that we're not in a good position now. We've never been in a good position because it's completely unequal and terrible war.

We're just in survival mode for the last two years. People are incredibly depressed now and tired. I don't feel like it's stopping anytime soon, and I don't feel like anyone is doing anything about it. I just feel like someone is benefitting big-time out of it, and we're just out here.

I try to do my best, and I compete, and I try to succeed. At the end of the day I look around, and I don't feel like all of this really matters as much. It's just a tennis match. It's just a tennis tournament. There out there is the real life. People I think forget about.

Yeah, unfortunately it's not breaking news anymore, so journalists are not interested in it. It's no drama. Why talking about it if there's no drama?

**Q. (Question about exhibition match played in St. Petersburg.)**

MARTA KOSTYUK: Russia is very well-known for very well psychological pressure and propaganda. It's really their specialty. You know, they're not bad at it. They're actually really, really good.

People, they get caught in it. You really need to be sharp all the time. You know how I'm thinking. I remember now how my coach said today 'sharp, sharp' on the court. People need to be sharp all the time because you feed to make difficult choices.

I came to the point where I know that the road I chose and the road I'm going with, not even with the war, but just in general, like in tennis and what I decide from day-to-day, it's a very difficult path, but I know it's the one that's worth it.

Every single day there are choices in front of you, you know, about anything, what you eat for breakfast, when to get up, should I go work out today, should I fight in this match. There are choices that people make.

I feel like as long as people are doing easy choices and the ones that benefit them the most, this is where we have a problem because I don't feel like there is growth and there is understanding in general for people around. Like, what's going on in the world? Look around, you know.

I think people get manipulated and get caught. Like, it's never just tennis. Go to Russia and play this tournament where they pay you a lot of money. I'm pretty sure they just got paid a lot of money, so that's why they went there. At the end of the day not everything is just about

the money. I mean, by far not about the money.

I just have different beliefs, and I truly don't understand these players. I don't know why they did it. Yeah, congrats to Russia's propaganda. It works. Not always, but it works, unfortunately.

**Q. Last year in China when you first started working with your coach you were talking about how other coaches maybe in the past when you would get emotional on court and you would do your thing, they would be, like, Control it, stop doing it. Obviously in the Mertens match today it's full Marta on the court. I'm curious, when you and Sandra talk about how to channel your intensity on the court, where are you guys at right now? Is she, like, You do you? Are you, like, I'm going to do me? Can you kind of give me a sense because I think fans watch it, and they're, like, Oh, she needs to calm down, but maybe not. Maybe that's you at your best. I don't know.**

MARTA KOSTYUK: People are different. Rybakina is an incredibly calm player, almost no emotions. I am very emotional person. Not just a player.

I feel like stacking up inside of me all the emotions that I have, I don't think it will ever work because I think I would just explode at some point. Yeah, it might work for a little bit, but then all these emotions that I was hiding inside, I will either get injured or I will just have mental breakdown or whatever it is. It has consequences.

Yeah, of course, there are times where I feel like, yeah, I'm getting a little bit over myself in my head, but it can happen. I'm making mistakes like every single human being on this planet. The only thing I try to do is improve.

Improve, I don't mean necessarily that I have no emotions and let's see if I improve very well the next two years, I would have no emotions. It's not going to be like this. I am not that kind of player.

I'm just trying to find this right balance between letting go but coming back as soon as possible in the game again because it's normal. I care. I want to win. I care a lot about this sport. I've given I don't know how many percent of my life for this sport since I'm 4 or 5 years old.

Of course, I care. My match, if I win this match, I will, first of all, have 100K more in prize money and 100 more points. Of course, obviously when you are top 10 you have 5,000 points, it doesn't matter. In the position I'm in, it matters, and it's important to me. It's what I work for.

Yeah, there are times where I really get too emotional and too excited about playing and so on. Yeah, it's part of me. I accept it.

I hope I will just be able to navigate this better, but I don't think necessarily I'll become a better player if I will be less emotional.

**Q. When you are yelling over to Sandra, yelling to yourself, whatever, what typically is the frustration the most? Is it that was a bad decision? Why did I do that? Or is it just a manifestation of the frustration? I don't know.**

MARTA KOSTYUK: I think it depends. It really depends because sometimes also I know sometimes I do a good job, but I still don't win the point at the end or game. I'm frustrated because I felt like I did everything right and it didn't work. Then sometimes I know I'm doing the wrong thing, so I'm also getting pissed. Yeah, I don't know.

Sometimes I feel like I'm fine but I need to let it out, to keep going. I let go, and then I go again. I think there is no one reason to it. Yeah, different reasons. I don't know.

Some days there's less. Some days there's more. We live and we learn.

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