

# Australian Open

Saturday, 20 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Victoria Azarenka

Press Conference



V. AZARENKA/J. Ostapenko

6-1, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Vika, strong performance today, especially in the first set. Talk us through your thoughts on the match, what you thought you did really well today.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, it was not an easy round, for sure. Jelena is a great player. She's very dangerous. Great champion. Grand Slam champion. I knew she's coming off of a really good form. We just played couple weeks ago in Brisbane. It was a really tough battle.

I knew I had to start my match strong and try to put as much pressure as I can to not let her dictate the play. I think I've done that really well in the first set.

Of course, she was kind of able to step up a little bit in the second set. But I felt like I kept going to try to create my opportunities. When I did, I felt like I've done really well to convert them.

Happy to be through in two sets.

THE MODERATOR: Who would like the first question?

**Q. Talking about the comeback in that second set, we've seen obviously with her, she can run games off, next thing you know you're in a third. How did you manage to claw yourself back and finish in two?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, after the first set, like, the break that I had, I don't think I did something really bad, but I felt like I could have played a little bit deeper. I landed a couple balls just a bit too short. She's going to take opportunity of that, and she did. Once that happened, she kind of stayed really strong on her serve those games.

I just kept telling myself it's just one break, just try to hold your serve, and then try to make her work for her game. I felt like one step at a time I really done better, put pressure, created opportunities, and was strong to convert them.

**Q. You talked about watching videos before the match about mentality. Can you share with us what**

**you watched, what you learned?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I was watching TikTok, so... It was a lot of, like, BS (laughter). There was one good video that kind of stuck to me.

I don't think it's something that I've never really heard before. Sometimes it just kind of comes up. It doesn't hit you like a light bulb. It's like, Oh, yeah, that's something that maybe can relate to the day, how I feel today, et cetera.

For me, as I said on the court, I try to find ways how to communicate with Leo because he does a lot of sports now. He obviously watches me play, how I train, what I do. I want to be able to explain to him things, how to kind of verbalize some of the emotions and the feelings that I have and I go through because he's going to go through whichever sport he kind of chooses.

I think it's a very important topic. I've obviously never had that happen to me when I was a kid. I would love for him to experience and learn about his emotions and feelings, how do you don't step away from them or turn around from things like pressure, how do you face that, how do you succeed and elevate your performance.

I just want to make sure that what I do and what I say kind of resonates to him, as well.

**Q. Naomi spoke about this tendency she had of comparing herself now to some idea of how she was playing years ago. Do you do that ever? How do you think you compare?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Myself to previous?

**Q. To your own self, say, 10 years ago.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I really don't. I don't compare myself at all. I think from the outside people probably do that much more than I do it. First of all, I would never want to go back 10 years ago. There's just no way.

I love who I am. I worked really hard to go through things in my life and to excel at them, mature, go through tough experience and learn from them, learn some wisdom. There's no way I would want to be 22 or 23.

I was doing this, like, cinema sessions or something like that. They showed me some of my old videos. I was like, Holy shit, that's just embarrassing (smiling). Definitely would not be looking too much back.

In terms of my game, I think that people really compare results rather than actual evolution of yourself and your game. I feel like I've definitely evolved as a player. The game itself evolved. You cannot really compare it as much.

I only compare to myself who I was yesterday really. I mean, sounds cliché. I think that perspective is really helps me to understand how I can improve, how I can get better. As long as I have that desire and that intention to learn, what is there to compare to?

I feel like I'm still growing, I still feel like I'm fulfilling my potential. To me, once that stops, I will be like, You know what, we move on to something else.

As long as I have that feeling, why not? Why not keep going?

**Q. About weather. Today we have quite high temperatures. The first week was a little bit low.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Depends which day because my first match I played was much hotter than today actually.

**Q. The question is, you have to adjust your game, the ball feels very different?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, absolutely. I played in quite different conditions my first three matches. My first match was really hot, then my second match was freezing, for me, 'cause I played with long sleeves, with leggings and everything. Today I think it was actually quite comfortable. I wouldn't say it was hot or anything like that. I felt it was actually quite comfortable today.

The ball traveled a little bit faster obviously than at night, when it's a bit cooler. I felt it traveled a little bit less fast than the hot day I played my first match.

We also play against different opponents. That also plays into factor. Tennis is a game of adaptation constantly. The weather in Melbourne, it's called four seasons for a reason. I kind of feel like we should just be prepared for whatever (smiling).

**Q. Can I get you to talk about how you deal with the Jelena Ostapenko experience. A lot less drama today than in Brisbane. The rant at the player box... Is it distracting? What is it like dealing with that?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I think it's something you kind of expect. She's doing what she's doing. It's actually

interesting 'cause I feel like it doesn't necessarily always affect her. When she's winning, she's like this; when she's losing, she's kind of like this. I think it's just how she deals with herself on the court.

I can't speak for how she feels and why she does it. I don't know. Some of the line callings, I mean, it can be a bit comical. I'm like, Whatever. What are you going to do? Sometimes we look at the lines and you're like, Are you sure it was in when it's close? When it's pretty obvious, then you maybe don't argue as much.

I just think that's how she is. I don't necessarily judge. I'm just there to play a match. If I can, let's say, destabilize her, that's part of my job, it's what's going to make me play better and that's what's going to make me win.

I'm not saying destabilizing intentionally or something like that. If she's doing what she's doing, I need to worry about what I do.

**Q. Players describe their progress in both personal traits and player traits in the dimension of handling pressure, certain level of maturity. In your case, would that be more going towards the side of relaxation rather than being analytical about how to manage pressure?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I'm not sure that there is, like, a one answer. I think sometimes people say something that they - I don't know - read somewhere. It sounds a little bit staged I will say.

I think different days is different feelings. Some days you feel a bit low on energy and you need to get your energy up; some days you feel too hyped or too anxious. How you going to do it? Are you going to balance it out or are you going to still go and try to be hyped more and more and more, kind of creating that anxiety?

I think the true understanding comes with what do you need in the moment, accepting the moment, and then see what tools do I have to manage the situation that is in front of me.

I think once you kind of understand the concept of yourself, what are your triggers, what are the things that make you feel better, worse, et cetera, that's when it comes to, I wouldn't say mastery, but that's on the way to mastering kind of yourself.

We all have different tendencies. We all have different history, all have different background, baggage, et cetera. There's no one size fit all. As I said, it's like sometimes people say, What did you think of the match? I thought of nothing. How? How did you do that? It's impossible.

It's why I don't give people advice. You have to really understand what people are going through before you can help or at least attempt to help.

**Q. What did you think was goofy when you looked back at old footage of yourself?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: It was me dancing. I was drunk. I was drunk after I won here, so I was dancing. It was funny. I was like... I don't drink. I'm like, What is that?

It was funny 'cause I was like, Oh, my God, Leo is dancing sometimes just like that. His dad actually just sent me a video, and I was like, This is unbelievable. He was dabbing, what I was doing in 2016. I was like, This is unbelievable.

**Q. Does he know what a dab is?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I mean, I have no idea. Hopefully not the real definition.

Yeah, it feels like a different life. I've said it I think few times, since Leo was born I feel like the old version of myself kind of not disappeared, but it feels so foreign, it feels so far away. I feel like I've just started to relearn about myself, about life, the goals and purpose. Things that used to motivate me before, they just don't.

So, yeah, I think it's been a pretty transformational definitely period. Still that journey of transformation from that moment.

**Q. What was it like to be interviewed by Petko? I'm sure you've been interviewed by players before.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I was waiting. I was like, When is she going to interview me?

It was a treat for sure. I was just interviewed by Sania Mirza before coming here. It's super cool.

But Andrea, I'm happy to see her. I think she's incredible for the broadcasting world. She gives incredible insight. She's very intelligent. She's very deep. You can see the way she conducts interviews is pretty special.

I think the knowledge and familiarity with all the players right now really gives that extra inside look. Yeah, I'm very happy to see her. I don't usually watch TV with commentating, but I'll watch her (smiling).

**Q. I'm not sure if you're a draw watcher, if you're aware of all the results, but you're only one of six seeds that's made it into the fourth round. There will be a maximum of eight. Does that have any impact on your mentality, hopes in the tournament, especially knowing you've had so much success**

**here in the past?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, hopes, no. Mentality, not really. Every match is going to be a battle. There are no bad players in the fourth round of a Grand Slam. If they are here, that means they worked their butts off and they played well and they deserve to be here.

I think right now the level of tennis is very, very competitive, and we have like a deep pool of players who can beat anybody on the given day. I think that's what makes them more dangerous. The consistency sometimes can be on and off. You don't know which player you're going to get on which day.

I think that they fully deserve to be where they are. There are no easy matches in the Grand Slam. So you have to start the tournaments right away from the first round. The evidence of seeded players kind of being out early is that the quality and the level of other players is really high.

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