

Australian Open

Sunday, 21 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/A. Anisimova

6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, congratulations. Back into the second week here at the Australian Open. Can you just give us your thoughts on your performance today.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'm super happy with the level I played today. Super happy to get through this round. She's really tough opponent. We always had really tough matches against each other, so I'm super happy to win this match in straight sets.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. If you had to look back and compare last year, how do you feel at this stage of the tournament compared to last year going into the second week?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. I think I feel stronger than last year. I don't know. So far I feel good. Hopefully I just can keep it up.

Q. Can I ask about the new routine. When the camera cut to Jason's head, I thought he might have had a tattoo. How did this come about? Was it your idea?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. Somehow I decided to start drawing my signature on his head (smiling). I did it before the first match. Now it's a routine. Every time he's not super happy that I'm going to do that. He's like, Okay, anything for the win. I'm like, Thank you.

Q. He's a good sport about it?

ARYNA SABALENKA: It's a cool spot, no?

Q. A lot of us have been watching the Netflix series. You're so public about what happened with you and your father, that whole process. Was that a hard decision for you to talk about that in front of tens of millions of people? As far as I could tell, you hadn't really talked about it before. Was that difficult for you? Has it changed you in any way verbalizing it?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. I just feel super

connected with my, I don't know, fans. I wanted to open up for them and just to hear the story.

I don't know. I felt like probably my story will motivate someone or will help someone in tough situation to find the way through. Like, when you lose somebody, it's really tough - especially someone like your father, for example. I know that some people are struggling with the same situation.

I just felt like it's tough, but you can also find kind of like motivation to keep going in life, keep doing your thing just for the memory of somebody.

I really hope that my story will help somebody else in this situation to keep going and keep doing their best.

Q. In your country growing up, in your culture, is it common for people to be so open with their emotions? In America people talk about stuff, it's just part of the culture. Was that part of your culture?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. It's depend of the person. Like, some people are open; some are not. I think I'm open person, so...

I don't know. I think even in America it's also like some people are open; some not. It's not like the whole country is super open people and they can talk about anything. No, it's depend the personality, I guess.

Q. Sorry for the change of subject here. Unless I'm wrong, I think you're the only player wearing the red Nike dress. Is that cool to kind of have your own sort of bespoke look? Is there any story behind the color choice or the style? How involved were you?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, yeah, you're right, I'm the only player who's wearing red dress. It's not like I was - how to say - included in part of the process, preparing the color and everything, no. They just show me the dress I will play with, and I was super excited to wear the only red dress.

But, I mean, I'm super happy. I feel so special. I really thanks to Nike that they give me this opportunity to feel special. But, of course, I want to have something more, like not just the different color.



But it is how it is. I'm super happy to be special.

Q. Is this the first time that's been the case?

ARYNA SABALENKA: No, I think the US Open was the first one I wear the pink dress. Now I have red dress.

Q. Can you compare where you are at this point heading into the quarterfinals, sort of where your head is and what you're feeling, versus what you were feeling last year? Is it different in terms of how you think about the next three matches?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I would say that I thought I will feel differently after winning Grand Slam. It's no different. You still feel the same. You still have to bring your best tennis. You still have to fight for it. It's exactly the same feelings like I had one year ago.

Q. Either Krejckova or Andreeva next. Can you address each of those players and what the challenges are.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, both players are really great players. I've played against both couple of times. We had, like, really tough matches.

Andreeva is a young girl, kind of like nothing to lose. She's playing really great tennis. Especially when you're coming back after 1-5 down, facing some match points and you still win the match, it's gives you more confidence and more belief, I would say, that you can do anything. It can be tricky. She's moving well, hitting the ball quite clean, serving well. She is a tough opponent.

About Barbora, we played a lot of matches. She plays really well. I think she's coming back after injuries, so also super motivated. Always tough battle.

It's going to be great battles, doesn't matter who I'm going to face.

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