

Australian Open

Tuesday, 23 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/B. Krejčíková

6-2, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, through to the semifinals again here in Melbourne. Talk about how pleased you are with tonight's match and how you're feeling generally at this stage of the tournament.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'm super happy to get through this match. Barbora is a tough opponent and we always had really tough battles against each other. I'm happy with the level I played and of course I'm happy to get this win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Well played. Just with the way the matches were running long, can I ask you, did the tournament ask you if you were prepared to move to Margaret Court Arena, and did you say no?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, there was the possibility that one of our matches will be moved, but we just decided to see how the Novak and Fritz match will go, if it's gonna be too long, then we kind of, like, agreed for the possibility to be moved. But Novak won third and fourth sets, so we just, yeah, just went on court as normal.

Q. So if it had gone to five, do you think you might have taken the switch at that point, if it had gone to five sets?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Probably, but I'm happy that it wasn't that long match and we were able to play on the Rod Laver Arena. I think for the quarterfinals match it's important to be played on such a big stadium.

Q. When you play in the night session presumably one of the advantages is that you should know when you're going to start your match. I just wonder how kind of disruptive is that to your planning?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, of course it would be much better to start at 7:00, but you cannot control other matches. Yeah, they played for long, but I just tried to focus on myself and just wait a bit longer. It's not that

bad.

Yeah, of course better to start at a not-before time where you're supposed to start it. But it is how it is, and we have to adapt quickly to the conditions. I think, yeah, we did it well (smiling).

Q. You played really late the other night, and you won very quickly. When you play later than expected like that, does it focus your mind? Do you really think, I'm going to get this done as fast as I possibly can? It looks like it.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I would say every time I play that late I would like to win as fast as I can, but I'm trying to focus on myself, because if you are in a rush, it can really, ends up really bad for you.

So I'm trying to not to rush things. If I finish quick, that's good; if not, then it is how it is.

Q. Just so I have this clear, were you asked while the Novak match was going on, Do you want to start now on Margaret Court?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, they ask our opinions, what do we think, and if we want to be moved right now. We just told them that, Well, let's see how this match goes. If it's going to be really long, then yeah, maybe it's a good idea to be moved. So they're not going to finish like Medvedev finish the other night.

But yeah, Novak won that set 6-2, and it still was quite early, and we decided to wait for this match.

Q. Just on playing Coco again, obviously second slam in a row, are you kind of happy to get another shot at her after the US Open final?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I love it. I love it. After US Open, I really wanted that revenge, and, I mean, that's a great match. It's always great battles against Coco, with really great fights. I'm happy to play her, and I'm super excited to play that semifinal match.

Q. Sorry to get back to this. Just on the discussion about whether the match got moved, you might not know the answer to this, but was it only yours and Barbora's match that had a possibility of being



moved? Do you know if Rublev and Sinner, whether that was in the conversation as well?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, in that room was me and Barbora, but we just told them, You can ask guys if they want to be moved, because, like, if they don't want to finish that late. I'm pretty sure they asked guys if they want to move, but yeah. It's not like they pushed us, you know. They just ask our opinion, and what, yeah, what we are thinking about be moved.

Q. This streak you have making semifinals at the majors, it's quite a long one at this point, and when we flash back a few years ago, it was tough for you to get to that stage. What has been the biggest difference, do you think, for you in terms of being able to sustain this consistent level at the last slams?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I think my mindset that I'm not getting crazy on court, I'm not rushing things. You know, I'm just playing point by point, and that's it, and fighting for every point without overthinking about my dreams, about what I want to do, about how many slams I want to win and all that stuff.

I was able to separate myself from that kind of mentality and just start focusing on myself and focusing on things I can improve and I can get better in, and what I actually have to do to win every match I play.

Q. On that, how did you do that? How did you separate yourself? I imagine it was pretty difficult.

ARYNA SABALENKA: It was (smiling). I guess it's all about experience. I think I'm more mature, older, whatever you want to call it (smiling).

But I think it all comes with experience, you know, like, with tough losses, with tough matches. Yeah, with experience.

Q. You sat down one day and just thought, I need to change? Or did you get some help? Did you speak to somebody about that kind of thing? A psychologist or...

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, I used to work with psychologist for four or five years. When you're working with psychologist at some point it's really helping, especially for young players, just start playing, you know, on tour.

But then at some point you start kind of expecting somebody to help you. You know, you're not fixing your problems by yourself, you're like expecting somebody to help you with that.

I just decided at some point, like, I need to figure out by

myself how to start control myself better. And I think that decision was the biggest decision for me and I start actually taking responsibility for everything I'm doing, and it's really help me to become more controlled on court.

Q. Facing Coco next. She's obviously on a hot streak at the moment. You've played her a couple of times. Won a couple of times. Why is she such a difficult opponent and why so difficult to beat?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, she's moving really well. Everything you do on court it's coming back. So you need to build the point probably couple times in one point, like, to have that, not like easy shot, but, like -- yeah, easy shot, you know, to finish the point.

So that's why she's really tough opponent. Yeah, but anyway, yeah, she's a great player, and I'm really excited to play her.

Q. Back on how you separated yourself, do you ever look back at videos of yourself when you did go a little bit crazy on court? Do they come up on TV sometimes and you think, Well, I don't need to see that?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I see that sometimes. (Laughter.) And I'm not super proud of myself doing some things on court.

It was part of my journey, and I'm actually happy that kind of I faced those kind of, like, challenges, and I'm happy that I was able to fix that and to become more calm on court.

It's been really huge work, and I'm happy that I was able to fix that.

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