

Australian Open

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Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/Z. Qinwen

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THE MODERATOR: Aryna, a very dominant performance today. Congratulations, your second Australian Open. Talk about your emotions right now and how you're feeling.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'm speechless right now. I don't know how to describe my emotions. But definitely I'm super, super happy and proud of everything I was able to achieve so far.

Yeah, just happy with the level I played today. She's a great player and very tough opponent. I'm super happy that I was able to get this win today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. I wanted to ask you about some of the clips we've seen backstage of you doing a coordinated dance with your team and warming up with balloons. Wondered how important is it for you to be enjoying the time between matches here?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I think it's all about having fun and enjoy the process. We always doing a lot of crazy stuff with the team (smiling).

I don't know. It's help me to stay focused on court. You know, because it's enough pressure on the court, and off the court we're just trying to keep it simple, keep it fun, and make sure that all of us enjoy the process.

Q. Congratulations. Your on-court and off-court persona seem quite different. Off court we know the person you are; on court you're quite the scary opponent. Do you have to spend a little bit of time becoming on-court Aryna? I remember Rafa used to talk about becoming a different player when he walked onto court. Do you try to do the same sort of thing?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, it's actually good that I'm two different people on and off the court, because if I would be the same person that I'm on the court off the court, I think I wouldn't have my team around me, and I

think I would be alone (smiling).

But yeah, I mean, it takes me so much time to kind of like become who I am right now on court, to have this control myself, and to understand myself better. Yeah, it's been a long journey and way to go.

I just said it, like, I'm going to retire after today. (Laughter.) But, no, too early, I think. Can still do something else.

But, yeah, it takes me a little while to become who I am right now.

Q. Was it important to you to win a second slam to show that it wasn't just a one-off?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, actually it's been in my mind that I didn't want to be that player who win it and then disappeared. I just wanted to show that I'm able to be consistently there and I'm able to win another one. I really hope that more, more than two right now, but for me was really important. That's why, no matter what the result, like, win or lose, we are always working hard, we always looking for things to improve in my game.

Yeah, it's all about the process and make sure that, about the discipline, make sure that you're always there, you always show up, and you always work hard.

Q. Congratulations. How different did you feel coming into this final compared with last year's final, and also compared with the final in September? Was it emotionally a different experience?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I would say that it was a little bit different. I think I wasn't that emotional on court, but before the match, it was the same. You know, like you still are waiting for it, you can't wait to start. You're super excited. It's still emotional off the court, but as soon as I step in on the court, I felt like, okay, I think I'm in control, and I think I'm, how to say, emotionally ready for it.

So compared to last year, it's completely different me. Compared to the US Open, once again, it's a different me. As I said, I'm more controlled and kind of like don't let the rest of the things come to my mind, and I was focusing on myself. So I think it's a big difference.

Q. Congratulations. You mentioned on court your family and you hope somebody might be able to translate what you were saying for them. Have you had a chance to speak to them after? While you're this far away from home, do you feel that far away from home?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yes, I really miss them a lot. Of course we are in touch, on the phone, but the phone is different than in real life.

Yeah, of course I spoke to my mom and there is already fight where the trophy is going. She's really pissed right now, by the way (smiling).

But yeah, I felt so far from them. But I'm really happy that we're able to see each other in the preseason, which we spent in Dubai. So we are far but not really. I really miss them so much.

I'm actually never really speak about them on the winning speeches or -- doesn't matter -- on the speeches. But I just wanted to make sure that they know how much they mean to me and that they are my biggest motivation and I'm doing everything for them.

Q. You've got two titles now, three finals all on hard courts. Do you feel like kind of hard courts is where you're at your best or do you think that you can achieve the same results on the other surfaces, as well?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I think last year I proved that I can play on each surface. I think those two semifinals I get super emotional. I lost, not like my matches. I played against incredible players, and they just played unbelievable level, but I felt like I got super emotional and I just let that semis go away.

But I definitely think that if I'm going to keep working like I'm working right now, and if we're going to keep building what we are building right now, I'm definitely able to do the same on the clay and on the grass.

So then I'll just keep working hard and hopefully this year I'll achieve the same goal on the clay or on the grass.

Q. Now you're able to talk about winning two slams and the relief in that. It was only last year before you arrived here, everyone wondered whether you'd win any. Did you ever have any concerns during the dark times you might not win any or did you always have the belief you'd get through?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, of course there was really a moment where I really didn't believe that I'm gonna win it one day, especially those period when I was serving double faults and couldn't fix my serve.

There was a lot of up and downs. But, you know, I just couldn't quit. You know, I felt like I just have to keep doing what I'm doing. I just have to keep fighting for my dream and make sure that if there is something, I want to believe there is something that my father is watching me and very proud of me. So I just couldn't stop for my family.

Of course there is the moment when you're, like, probably I will never get it. But you just have to keep working hard and just keep trying. You'll see at the end if it's meant to be for you or it's not. Like, you just have to stop thinking negative, you know.

Q. The last year has obviously been amazing but at the same time you have also had some tough losses in big matches, like you mentioned, the semifinals. Wondered how you managed to take them in the right way and learn from them rather than allowing them, I guess, to affect your progress?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I think it's all come with experience, as I said. There is not going to be big wins without really tough losses. Of course I was very down after those matches. I was crying, I was smashing the racquet, as we see. I was really crazy.

But then, like, later on after day or two, we sit down with the team, thinking, okay, what we have to do to fix it and to make sure this will never happen again.

So it's always a process, and as they say, you just to enjoy the process and trust the process and believe that next time you'll do better.

Q. In the Netflix series you spoke about how you desired to win two Grand Slam titles by the age of 25, how much it means to you and how much now the confidence as a double Grand Slam champion to keep showing your personality and being out there.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, it was really important. It was my dream. There is still so many things to achieve. There is still many goals, you know, I have.

I quite didn't get the question. (Laughter.) Maybe I'll drink another one.

THE MODERATOR: Can you repeat the question.

Q. In the Netflix you were very open. You were open about yourself.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Okay, I lost it.

Q. You get more confidence now, now that you're a double champion, keep sharing these things with everyone.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I think it's very important to be open. I feel like I really want to be connected with my fans and make sure that they know my story and probably my story will inspire someone else and will help someone else.

Now having two Grand Slam titles, it's definitely give me more confidence and believe in myself. I just have this knowing that all my life it wasn't, like, wasting of time and I was doing the right thing. I'm where I'm meant to be, so that's really important.

Q. Since your first Grand Slam win back in Melbourne last year, has that sort of improved your mental state and made you play more freely in a way, or has it been same old?

ARYNA SABALENKA: You know what? I actually felt after last year it's going to help me to be more free and don't care about things, and blah, blah, blah. But not really. You still feel the same. You still want it badly and you still working very hard for it, and you still have to show up and fight for it and show your best level.

So I feel like, because before I was watching all these champions crying after each slam, I was, like, Come on, you've done it, like, 15 times. Why are you still crying? Right now, I didn't even get to that point, but I feel like I understand why they still crying. Because every time, the same pressure, the same expectations. You want it same way. So it's always emotional. Yeah, it's still the same, you know, (smiling).

Q. Congratulations. You just said how much you have been struggling with your serve a couple of years ago, but now you have one of the best serves on the tour. So do you think that fact gives you, like, during the match, knowing the fact that you have good serve, makes you feel calm or comfortable or does it change your mindset or strategies?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, definitely that year when I was struggling a lot helped me a lot to understand that, even if my serve is not working, I'm able to fight for it, and I have good return and I'm able to, yeah, as I said, fight for it. Right now when I'm serving a little bit better than that year, definitely I feel more, I don't know, like controlled on my serve. Even if I'm down in the score in my serve or even if someone breaks me, I am, like, I'm not getting crazy like I used to, and I have this belief that no matter what happen, I'm able to fight for it. I have a lot of weapons, not only my serve.

Q. You mentioned your father there. Do you feel like you're sort of playing sometimes to honor his memory?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Like, before last year's slam, it was like that, but since then, of course he's my biggest

motivation. He's been everything for me.

But right now, like, I have my mom, my sister, who is here with me, and I feel like I have to think about them. But I just feel that he's always with me. I'm very thankful for everything he did for me, and I think if not him I wouldn't be here. Yeah (smiling), right now I'm playing for my mom and my sister and my grandmothers.

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