

# Roland Garros

Friday, 25 September 2020

Paris, France

## Victoria Azarenka

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. In New York you talked a little bit about how refreshing it was for you to be older, wiser, more mature, stepping out of that tennis tunnel vision.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I said that (laughter)?

**Q. You did. You seemed to be pretty happy about the way you're living your life these days. If you were asked and had to give advice to 16-year-old Coco Gauff about how she can maybe deal with the pressures and expectations, what advice would you give her?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: If she needs my advice, she can come ask me any day. That's what it is. I'll be happy if I can some way help. But I'm not going to sit here and talk about advice to somebody who didn't ask me for my advice.

**Q. You made the final in New York. How are you looking to build on that result, especially transitioning from the hard courts to a clay court in Paris?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I don't necessarily feel like from New York there's a buildup up to here. If anything, there is more of a buildup from Rome. I feel like it's going to be a little bit of a different circumstances. I feel like it's not necessarily coming from zero because I feel like the experience of having matches does play a role a little bit in it.

I don't necessarily feel the buildup from New York is going to be something for me to pay attention to. It's more about, like, how I can adjust and adapt more to this condition, to this tournament. I wouldn't really think of New York right now.

**Q. Obviously now the focus is on the weather conditions. What is your expectation about playing on the clay with such conditions? On the mental aspect, what do you feel about the cold and the rain in Paris?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: How do I feel about it? I think it's pretty bad because it's really cold. At the same time



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we are all in the same conditions, so I'm not going to sit here and complain about it too much.

I think the focus is, like, what can I do best to perform here. It's going to be a lot about adjustment. I played today for the first time on the courts here after it rained. It's very different. The court feels really, really heavy.

It's going to be about adaptation day by day. It's not going to be like a normal Roland Garros where the ball bounces high and the court gets faster. I feel like it's going to be something different.

I feel like it's going to be day-to-day adjustment. I think more than ever it's going to be about day-to-day.

**Q. I wanted to ask about the clay. You've obviously had amazing results at Roland Garros in the past. I feel like you looked more comfortable, particularly from last year. What do you have to do to bring your best on this surface?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, you're right, I feel like especially from last year, I felt that I finally start to kind of finding my rhythm, actually enjoying myself playing on clay, sliding, instead of cussing the clay out every single time I play on it. I was actually looking forward to play.

I feel like I enjoy better, I adjust better. As I said earlier, I think it's going to be a lot about adaptation from day-to-day. I'm actually excited of kind of building up my game on clay. The second year I enjoy it after 16 years on tour (smiling). It's about time to make some evolution on clay. I'm looking forward to it.

**Q. What did you previously cuss out about clay?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I hated clay. I hated everything about it. The shitty bounces, the sliding that I can't stop. The ball bounce here and everything. Ask me what I could not complain about when I used to play, so...

I guess growth. Hey, maturity (smiling).

**Q. You're playing now with such a renewed freedom, you seem more relaxed on and off the court. Maybe you're not so hard on yourself mentally. When did you sense this shift mentally, this calmness starting to come over you? As a by-product, that's building in your results on the court. When did you feel this starting to take hold?**



VICTORIA AZARENKA: When did I start to feel that? I would say, I mean, last few years I had a lot of opportunities to test out my mental strength. I felt that I was able to handle that really well off court, then on court was more difficult. You just can't sometimes handle all the pressure that comes at you.

I felt that maybe, like, around June is where I started to feel like doing some maybe new ways of approaching some situations. Then it kind of started from there, building up on that.

I would say that I started to understand and feel myself better around June, end of June.

**Q. Were you surprised at how quickly that transferred into on-court results?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Surprised? No, because I don't look at it that way. Results are, as I said many times, a confirmation of hard work. I think what I'm more proud, not surprised, is the way that I'm able to sustain that level that I've been able to achieve personally, and kind of even progress that. That's the most important for me.

Tennis on the court is just a bonus really. The way I feel about myself, the way I feel off the court, that's my real moment that I'm really proud of.

**Q. I would like to know if you could choose one song and one dance to describe the way you play on the court going into Roland Garros, what would they be and why?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Let me understand a little bit. You are asking me what kind of song I would choose to match the way I'm feeling about French Open?

**Q. Yes.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: It's raining. Something about rain (laughter).

No, no, I don't know. I mean, did I say that I enjoy karaoke?

**Q. I've seen you singing karaoke. I don't know if you enjoyed it, but I've seen you singing.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: You've seen me singing karaoke? Did we go to the same bar together or something (laughter)?

**Q. This was about 10 years ago. If you could pick a song or a dance to choose how you will approach Roland Garros, what would it be?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I wouldn't think about Roland Garros. I would choose something from reggaeton and I

would dance some Latin beats. I don't know how to describe my dance with words.

**Q. If you win Roland Garros, will you promise to do that dance for us on Chatrier?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: No (smiling).

**Q. A personal question. I know recently you became a mom. I would like to know what has that been like being on tour with your son?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, recently, my son is almost four, so that's not that recent. But having my son on the tour with me, it's been challenging and it's been great at the same time. I wouldn't have it any other way.

I feel like now it's the time where he starts to understand more what I do, what kind of is going around. I feel like it just going to get better from here. Now he started to play tennis himself, so I feel like it's even more exciting right now.

**Q. Do you think a limited amount of spectators will enhance your experience? Is that something you're looking forward to welcoming at Roland Garros?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: To be honest, I'm a little bit nervous about it just because I feel like, as all players, are a little bit nervous about the health situation. I don't necessarily know how I feel about that for that reason. Obviously having spectators and playing in front of fans, it's always what I would prefer to do.

But having these circumstances, I'm a little bit more nervous about that. If I'm understanding correctly, it's only on one court, right, the spectators are going to be? Or are they on all the courts?

**Q. I know it's limited to 1,000 today. I'm not sure if it's one court or not.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Okay. So, yeah, if it's only on one court, I think it's going to be a little bit weird for other players. I don't know why we're trying something new because obviously we already had one Grand Slam in front of us where it seemed like things worked out well.

I guess we always need to try something new for no reason. But, you know, it is what it is, so...

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