

Roland Garros

Sunday, 27 September 2020

Paris, France

Maria Sakkari

Press Conference

M. SAKKARI/A. Tomljanovic

6-0, 7-5

Q. Wanted to ask you about the conditions today, how you felt playing and whether it may be a little too dangerous to play at this time of year on the clay?

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, for sure it's like something that we're not used to it. I mean personally, I haven't played in these conditions in a long time, not even practiced, you know. So I think it's tough for everyone.

It's not nice to play under these conditions, but we're professionals and we are actually lucky to be playing here and not having the tournament cancelled.

So, yeah, as I said, we have to just get used to it and adapt.

Q. Following up on the first question, do you feel safe playing at Roland Garros?

MARIA SAKKARI: What do you mean?

Q. Like, do you feel comfortable on court and safe as you wouldn't be injured in any way?

MARIA SAKKARI: You mean because of the weather?

Q. Yeah, because of the conditions and the weather and so on.

MARIA SAKKARI: The weather. Yeah, I mean if you warm up well and you take good care of your body and, as I said previously, it's not the best conditions you can play but, yeah, you just have to mentally be prepared and actually be prepared for the worst.

I think we're lucky we're going to have nicer days following in the tournament.

Q. Can you just talk about what the preparations were like after the US Open to get ready for Roland Garros. I know Palermo was obviously part of the plan to get prepared, but what did you and Tom look to do and I guess how can you prepare for the conditions that you're kind of seeing in Paris, not



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just with the weather but just also different ball, different time of season, all sort of stuff, how exactly are the courts playing?

MARIA SAKKARI: Okay, I'll take it from there, from the very beginning.

So I was actually lucky enough to get the balls pretty early, I think even before Tom came in Athens. So I started playing on clay with those balls. I personally didn't mind them in Athens because there were warm conditions so the ball was flying. Of course here nothing feels good. It's very cold, the balls get so big because it's wet.

I cannot complain because I kind of have an advantage because of my physicality and because of my game, I mean I think I have like a spinny game on the clay. So if I get that power and the spin, it's a good combination for them, for the conditions.

But as I said, you know, we didn't know it's going to be that cold. In Athens it was 35 degrees, so it's different, different situation and we have to embrace it and just be prepared mentally because it's going to be, you know, a lot of rain, it's going to be cold, it's not going to be nice to play out there unless you're playing under the roof, which is still, you know, quite cold in there.

Just as I said, we have to be lucky to be playing here. I mean the WTA has only one more tournament left, so especially us, it's the second-to-last tournament and probably the last tournament for many players. And it's just, you know, we're blessed and lucky to be playing here.

Q. Based off of that, do you think that these sorts of conditions and the way that Roland Garros is playing this year, does it favor any particular type of game style or is this a pure mental test? Does this make physicality more of an issue, less of an issue? What do you think as someone more experienced in tennis than me?

MARIA SAKKARI: You know what, it's crazy because first time I hit on the courts I was like, okay, the advantage is with the players that they hit flatter. Like, I played with Madison and the ball actually died, it was like the bounce was so low that I was like if I slice quite well the ball is not going to bounce. But then sometimes the ball bounces high.



So I think you just have to -- okay, it's not going to jump as much as last year or in hot conditions. But I don't know what to tell you. Of course, big servers don't have an advantage because you don't get out of your serve a lot of power and a lot of spin. You cannot get a lot of kick.

So it's just you have to be mentally, you know, strong and just be patient because you have to play long rallies, for sure.

Q. Just to finalize for me, the way the ball is playing now and the way your game is on clay, do you see yourself as one of the outside favorites to maybe make a run in the later stage of the tournament?

MARIA SAKKARI: I mean, yeah, of course I believe that I can do that no matter the conditions. I believe a lot in myself and why not do it here where things will be tougher for most of the players.

Actually, today I think were the worst conditions you can play, and I manage it quite well. Of course I didn't play good tennis, but it was okay. And I don't see myself -- I don't see why not making a deep run.

Q. How do you compare, because since you were just in the US Open and then now you're in Paris, so how do you compare what the vibe is like amongst, I know this you're obviously friends with lots of the players, how different is it, I guess, from New York compared to now and it's only been a two-week span?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, hmm, I will be deadly honest and I have to say that, I don't know how can I say it? New York was amazing from all the perspectives. I mean, we had the suite, we had more social distancing.

Of course, here the club is quite downtown, you know, and it's in a residential area. It's very tough for them to -- and also the weather doesn't let them having us in the outside area, which makes it a lot tougher.

But they're trying hard every day and they are trying to split the people into two stadiums and the two restaurants and the areas. I heard a lot of complaints in New York about everything there and I have to say that USTA did a great job and I just want to say it because I'm a person that, you know, really appreciates the things.

And so far, I mean, the French Federation also is doing a great job because it's also more players, more people, less space, worse weather. So I think they both have done a tremendous job bringing us here with the say if he is conditions.

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