

Roland Garros

Monday, 31 May 2021

Paris, France

Serena Williams

Press Conference

S. WILLIAMS/I. Begu

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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I think we'd all like to know how you absorbed and reacted to the news of the day, Naomi withdrawing? Did you speak with her at all in the last few days?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Honestly I just found out before I walked into the press conference, so that's the extent of it right now for me.

Q. That was the first-ever night session here. You have a phenomenal record at night. Why is that? What did you make of the whole lack of atmosphere? Not quite New York.

SERENA WILLIAMS: Well, I wasn't sure why there wasn't a crowd. I guess it was because there's curfew at 9. It's definitely a little different.

Overall, yeah, ironically enough night sessions are not my favorite matches, but I do have a good record at it. Clearly something about it gets me hyped.

I have to say it was pretty cool to be able to play the first night session ever here at Roland Garros. That was something I thoroughly enjoyed.

Q. You were down two set points in the first set tiebreak. What were you thinking in those moments? How happy were you to be able to escape that tight moment?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, I mean, I'm happy that I was able to save those moments. Did not want to lose that first set. I wasn't thinking at that moment. I was just thinking to get that ball out the air, because I've been hitting some good swing volleys in practice.

Q. I'm sorry if somebody asked this, but the shoes are amazing. Could you talk about the genesis of how they came about.

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, the inspiration is behind



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Green Day's "Dookie" album. Obviously I'm a big Green Day fan. That was a classic album for me. That's kind of where the inspiration came from.

We went from there and put all my favorite things on there, some cool sayings that I say, people that mean a lot to me in my life, some cool art because I love art. It's almost like they're an art piece. There's very few of them. I am excited to have all of them (smiling).

Q. In the Naomi Osaka statement she mentioned her anxiety and depression she's suffered in the last couple of years. As a general comment, do you feel enough is done by the WTA and Grand Slams to help tennis players' mental health off the court?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I feel like there is a lot of, like, articles and stuff that they put out. I think you really have to step forward and make an effort, just as in anything. You have to be able to make an effort and say, I need help with A, B, C, and D, and talk to someone. I think that's so important to have a sounding board, whether it's someone at the WTA or whether it's someone in your life. Maybe it's someone that you just talk to on a weekly basis.

I've been in that position, too. I've definitely had opportunities to talk to people, kind of get things off my chest that I can't necessarily talk to anyone in my family or anyone that I know.

For me it's important to have awareness and make that step.

Q. Very crowded summer schedule this year, French Open, Wimbledon, Olympics, US Open. Was it always a given for you that you wanted to play all these tournaments starting with this one? Was this an easy choice to play at the French Open or did you think of trying to space it out more or rest strategically and prepare more for the other ones?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, I've had enough rest in the past 16 months, so I should be totally ready to go for it.

Q. You've been very cooperative with the press over the years. When you were young, you were very, very shy. Was it difficult for you to get used to your role, especially once you started to win big? Did you ever come into a press conference feeling really super anxious or concerned?

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SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, a lot. You know that. Many, many of 'em. I've been where I've been very difficult to walk in in those moments. But, you know, it made me stronger.

Q. Obviously this whole thing with Naomi Osaka has been the hot topic for these first few days. I appreciate what you've just said, you only really just found out about it. When you look back over these few days as to all that's transpired, what are your feelings and thoughts? Do you think it shouldn't have happened? What's your view?

SERENA WILLIAMS: The only thing I feel is that I feel for Naomi. I feel like I wish I could give her a hug because I know what it's like. Like I said, I've been in those positions.

We have different personalities, and people are different. Not everyone is the same. I'm thick. Other people are thin. Everyone is different and everyone handles things differently.

You just have to let her handle it the way she wants to, in the best way she thinks she can, and that's the only thing I can say. I think she's doing the best that she can.

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