

Roland Garros

Thursday, 3 June 2021

Paris, France

Maria Sakkari

Press Conference

M. SAKKARI/J. Paolini

6-2, 6-3

Q. That was a very convincing win out there; you looked pretty pumped today, really up for that. Considering last year you'd gone down to another Italian, were you really up for that today to push deeper into this tournament?

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think I played great tennis in some parts of the match. It was good overall. Of course there were some moments where I didn't like what happened, of course. I mean, Roland Garros is one of my favorite tournaments, so I'm really glad, and I hope I can do much better these weeks.

Q. What are you most pleased about in your game up to now since the start of the tournament? And since I'm from Belgium I'd like to have your thoughts on your next opponent, who could be Elise Mertens.

MARIA SAKKARI: Sure, I'm pleased. I feel like I haven't reached my level yet, my good level, but I think I'm playing good solid clay court tennis.

I think I served really well today, very clever and very good choices on my serve.

Regarding my next opponent, of course they're still playing, but I know Elise probably -- she's one of my oldest friends on the tour. We've known each other since a very young age. We've played each other a lot of times, especially on the ITF Tour. She's a very, very -- she's an unbelievable player and very respectful. She has a very difficult game, and it's going to be a battle for sure if we get to play.

Q. I saw last week you were hitting with Iga in the lead-up. How much did her run last year inspire you and make you believe that maybe you're not that far off?

MARIA SAKKARI: I mean, Iga, she's a lot younger than me. She's five years younger than me, but what she achieved last year is unreal. I'm very happy for her because she's a lovely girl and a very good player, of course. I always have good practices with her.



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I mean, I know that I'm not far away from that, but still a long way to go. Of course I cannot think about that from the third round. But I know that my game is there, especially when I bring up something extra, it really helps and really gives me the confidence I need to make the step.

But as I said, I'm still far away from that. I'm going to think about it later on.

Q. Back on Elise, what is so tough to play against her? Can you elaborate, and what's going to be the key for you?

MARIA SAKKARI: I mean, every player has different advantages and different strengths in their game. I haven't played Elise for a long time. I think the last time was in Rabat. She's a very solid player, and she has a very solid performance throughout the year, so I think that overall she's a very -- I don't know, tough player to play. It's not something specific. I can't think of something now. As I mentioned, everyone has different things, different strengths. I will remind myself what to do when the time comes.

Q. You said you were very good friends with Elise when you were on the ITF circuit. Do you remind any specific things doing together, any anecdotes?

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, I remember I played -- I don't remember if it was 25,000 or -- well, me and Elise go back a long time. We go Under-12 in Belgium when I was playing tournaments. But the moment where I remember is practicing in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt. We were very -- our ranking was not high. But we played, I think -- either we played both weeks against each other or one of these two, but we were practicing and we were both there with our moms and we were hanging out a little bit. But it's nice to have nice memories with players from a long time ago.

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