

# Roland Garros

Sunday, 22 May 2022

Paris, France

## Maria Sakkari

### Press Conference

M. SAKKARI/C. Burel

6-2, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Good match today. You were playing a home favorite on Philippe Chatrier. How did you feel you did out there?

MARIA SAKKARI: I think, you know, it's always tough to play first round in a Grand Slam, especially against a local. Obviously, as I said on the court, most of the crowd out there was supporting her, and it's kind of normal.

But I think, you know, I handled my stress really well, handled the stress of the first round extremely well. My tennis maybe was not 10 out of 10, but overall I think I did a great job.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

**Q. What was it like just to have to wait kind of for a bit of time to get out on court? Then obviously with the matches that were ahead of you, Ons going out, Felix getting taken to five, it can add stress as you're preparing your opening match, as well. How did you feel you handled that?**

MARIA SAKKARI: I think that it kind of like it worked for me the opposite way. I had more time just to find ways to release my stress. Yeah, there was always going to be stress, because that's the way in a slam.

But as I said, I had more time. My best friends are here, so I had a chat with them, which really helped me get distracted. Obviously my team always tries to make me laugh before a match, and I think that I have a very nice atmosphere around me in this tournament.

I'm very glad, you know, how everything went today.

**Q. Last year you played really well here at Roland Garros. What did you learn from that experience that can help you again this year?**

MARIA SAKKARI: You know, it was a very nice experience last year, but it's already a year ago, so I don't really think about what happened in 2021. But of



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course it was the start of, you know, a different journey for my career.

I started, I have said many times, believing more in myself after what happened here, and I said it so many times as well, this is my favorite tournament, it is my favorite court.

As I mentioned on court that it's my first time that I actually played with a full crowd, and it was a very unique experience to be back under normal circumstances.

**Q. A question on you said your tennis was not 10 out of 10. What will you be looking to improve looking at the figures after the match, stats for the coming rounds?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Of course, you know, you cannot expect to play a perfect match when it's a first round of a Grand Slam. A lot of things won't go as you have planned or as you have practiced.

But I'm pretty sure I have experience that multiple times that once I start, you know, playing a few matches, my tennis always improves. Obviously my baseline game has to just improve and maybe reduce the unforced errors.

But overall, it wasn't a 10 out of 10, but I'm very happy with how I played.

**Q. Quick comment on the next game. I think you know the opponent already, it's Muchova, the Czech player. You have played against her before. Do you know her?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, of course. I think she was injured for a while, so she was out. Especially in Grand Slams, she has been having amazing results. I know it's one of the toughest second rounds that I could have faced, yes.

She's a very tricky player, because she has variety in her game. But as I said, I think that my game is going to be even better for the next match.

I trust my abilities and my game overall. So I think I'm just going to go out there and enjoy one more day here at Roland Garros.

**Q. Thierry Henry was in the crowd. I don't know if**



**you know him. You are a big football fan. What's it like to have kind of an elite athlete come and watch your matches?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, I didn't see him (smiling). Where was he sitting? Well, he is like a legend of the game. I do follow football because I'm a huge Olympiacos fan.

Was he in the team of France when Greece won the Euro 2004? He was. Yeah, I have good memories from that, even though I was nine years old, but that will never go away...

No, I watched the documentary of the Greek football coach recently that was coaching the team back then, and there were a lot of highlights from the match against France. I'm pretty sure that I saw him.

Obviously I have a lot of respect for every single athlete in the world, and he had an amazing career. Thankfully I did not see him because I would get stressed, even more stressed that he was watching (smiling).

**Q. You said that the Grand Slams are the big events and that there is always pressure. How important do you think it is for you to manage that pressure in between the games as well as what you do on the court?**

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, it's very important, because you always have time because you have days off in between. So you always think about the match and the next match.

So it's just, you know, very important to have the right people around you to do things that can distract you. But obviously the more experience you get, the easier you can handle this stress.

But I'm in a phase right now where I just want to enjoy myself on the court, because I did not enjoy myself the last couple of months after Indian Wells. For me, it's very important that I can do that here in my favorite tournament.

I'm just looking forward to the next match. I'm excited.

**Q. If you'll humor me, a slightly different question. You guys have those reusable bottles on the court. Does that change anything in terms of what you have to do hydration-wise? Normally you guys go out there with multiple bottles, you pull them from the fridge, et cetera, et cetera. Is it any different?**

MARIA SAKKARI: It is, because I'm pretty sure that a lot of, especially guys that have to play five sets here, they need to have a lot of energy drinks with them before the match. I'm always between two and three, never more

than that. But, yeah, I understand, you know, the thinking behind that, which is very respectable and, you know, I admire that they are trying to do something different. It's just, it makes a little bit our life tougher in a way where we have to plan everything ahead.

But it's a good idea. It's something different (smiling).

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