

Roland Garros

Sunday, 28 May 2023

Paris, France

Marta Kostyuk

Press Conference

A. SABALENKA/M. Kostyuk

6-1, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Marta, just talk about playing on Chatrier today and opening up the Roland Garros this year on that court.

MARTA KOSTYUK: It wasn't nice to play on Sunday, I have to be honest. I played on Chatrier two years ago against Iga, and, unfortunately, it was empty because of curfew and COVID, and it was really nice to have a crowd today.

I don't know. It was just enjoying my time there. Not my best match, but it's tennis.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Marta, were you shocked by the crowd's reaction as you walked off, and how did that feel because it can't have been pleasant?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I don't know. I want to see people react to it in ten years when the war is over. I think they will not feel really nice about what they did.

Q. When you continued to make your stand, I assume you're going to continue to do this and decline to shake hands with Belarusian players.

MARTA KOSTYUK: I said that I will not do it, and I don't know why people think I'll suddenly change my mind.

Q. Just to follow up on that, do you think you are surprised by their reaction? Do you think you'll get a different reaction when you do this at Wimbledon, and would you like to think you'll get a different reaction?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I'm pretty sure I would because Wimbledon banned them last year, and I think a lot of -- when I was in U.K. last year, the people were reacting to us differently even, like, I don't know, on the street literally.

I felt a lot of support, so I'm pretty sure their reaction would be different.



ROLAND-GARROS

Q. I don't even know if you would know this, but last night the biggest ever drone attack was launched on your home city. I just wonder if you could talk about what it's like to have to sort of go out and play a big match in the knowledge that something like that has happened to what you call or where you call home, or do you just get used to it?

MARTA KOSTYUK: Usually when I wake up during the night, I don't check my phone, but for -- but I checked my notification. When I see some groups that have a lot of notification throughout the night, I know that something happened.

And I checked my phone tonight -- last night at 5:00 in the morning, and I saw everything that's going on. I mean, I just want to say that I'm proud of our air defense system and how they shoot almost 100 percent of things.

But, yeah, I don't know, it's part of my life. It's something I cannot describe probably.

I try to put my emotions aside any time I go out on court. I think I'm better than before, and I don't think it affects me as much on a daily basis, but yeah, it's just -- I don't know. There is not much to say really. It's just part of my life.

Q. Marta, you wouldn't have had a chance to see this, but Aryna was next door and said something strong. I wanted read a small line from. She said: Nobody in this world, Russian athletes or Belarusian athletes, support the war, nobody. How can we support the war? Nobody. Normal people will never support it. It seems like a very strong thing for a Belarusian player to stand up and say. I wonder what you thought of it.

MARTA KOSTYUK: You know, she never says that she personally doesn't support this war, and I feel like journalists should, because you guys do a lot of work on lightening things and asking people their opinions on certain things, and I feel like you should change the questions that you ask these athletes because the war is already there. It's been 15 months since the war has begun.

I feel like you should ask these players who would they want the war to win because if you ask this question, I'm not so sure these people will say that they want Ukraine

to win.

I don't know. This is something life-changing I think in the world of people because this is the biggest difference there is because if you ask me who would you want the war to win, I would say Ukraine, of course. I don't know how it will be over, but I want Ukraine to win at the end. But about them, I'm not sure.

She should talk for herself I think, first of all. Then, talk about all the other athletes because I know -- I personally know athletes from tennis that support the war. To say nobody is a little bit -- I think is a little bit strong because I think you can only speak for yourself.

I don't know. I don't know what else to say.

Q. Wimbledon have announced they're going to give two rooms to Ukrainian players when they're in the U.K. for the grass court season. What is your reaction to that, and does it feel like they're just sort of not paying you off but trying to give you the guilty-free money so you don't speak out perhaps in this environment at SW19?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I think given the fact that none of Ukrainian players can go back home, I feel like this was supposed to be encouraged by all the tournaments, I guess.

There were tournaments that tried to do something like this, and I feel like it should be on every tournament because I live in a different country because I have to live in a different country because I cannot go home.

This gives me a lot of extra expenses that I wouldn't have had if the war was not there. Yeah, obviously, it's nice, and it helps. And you feel like people at least somehow -- obviously, no one can understand what we are going through. It's unexplainable, okay?

It just makes me believe that there are good people in this world left, you know.

Q. Marta, could you just chat to us, please, about why you are competing on the tour right now? Is it just because you want to concentrate on your tennis, or do you also want to use it as a platform to explain what is going on in your life and in your country?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I mean, I play tennis because I love tennis, and this is my job. I'm not going to lie. It's paying off a lot of things in my life.

And I cannot say that I'm bad at it. I want to -- you know, this is something I do in life. If the war is there, I shouldn't stop my life because of it. You know, I have to do something because the moment you stop, I think it's over.

I don't know. I love tennis. Every time I go out on court, no matter who is on the other side of the net, I try to give my best. I try to test myself. I try to challenge myself and become a better person. So I think this is why I do this.

Q. Ultimately, in a war only the leaders can continue it or call it off, but a war is a battle for minds and hearts. Sabalenka, who is in a very difficult position, says in Indian Wells and here, I cannot stop the war.

MARTA KOSTYUK: I'm sorry for her.

Q. Do you think in a way, though, that's not the issue whether she can stop the war or not stop the war, but it's whether a leader and role model chooses to speak out or in a very, very difficult situation or not to speak out?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I don't know why it's a difficult situation for her. Since the beginning of the war, all of them have very difficult situation, and I don't understand what is difficult about it, you know.

She might be World No. 1 after this tournament, and she's going to be World No. 1 in one of the most known sports in the world. I don't know. If you check the statistics in Russia, who support the war or who don't, in Russia there is 80 percent or 85 percent of people who support this war.

Just by speaking out, I think she can just send some message because most of these people, they haven't even ever left the country. Like you know how Russia and U.S. are the biggest enemies ever, and there are people who never left Russia, and they say, Oh, Russia should destroy U.S.; you know, they're the biggest enemies of ours, but they've never even been there. They don't even know how people live there. I tell you, there is a big difference how people live in U.S. and how people live in Russia.

Someone like Aryna, who is traveling the world, who is -- I don't know, she has a big platform of people who support her. I speak out about things.

And I see, like, "New York Times," "Washington Post," CNN, BBC. There are so many platforms that millions, billions of people in the world read, and just to reject her responsibility of having an opinion on the most important things in the world, I cannot respect it.

She said that I hate her. I never said publicly nor privately nor to anyone that I hate Aryna Sabalenka or any of the players. I just don't respect her because of her position in all of -- in this situation.

Because the hate, as I said in the interview to Ukrainian



publisher yesterday, hate or love, it's an emotion. Okay, like, people can love me, people can hate me. I don't care. That's what she said. I don't care either.

But if someone doesn't respect me, hmm, then I don't feel nice, you know, because respect is not an emotion. I don't understand why she's in a difficult situation, honestly. I don't understand.

Q. When was the last time you were in Ukraine? What is your family situation like there now? Where is it that you are living now?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I was in Ukraine end of March after Miami because I had to go there to do a lot of documentation for my foundation that I started.

Yeah, I'm currently in Monaco, and my mom and my little sister, they live close by. My dad and my grandpa are in Kyiv.

Q. What does it mean for you to win the war? Kick them out of the Ukraine include Crimea Island or, it's crazy, but going to Moscow? What does it mean for you to win the war?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I think to win the war is to kick them out to the borders before 2014, and the most important thing is to not let them back in ever again.

I don't think people have an idea of going all the way to Moscow. I mean, I don't think we're interested really. You know, we have to keep up with what we have. You know, not getting more and leaving behind what we have.

So I think there's a long way to go, but this is I think what we are all thinking.

Q. First of all, just curious if you have ever -- like today, have you ever felt hostility outside of the locker room from people when making statements or not --

MARTA KOSTYUK: Have I ever felt what?

Q. Hostility, like the crowd booing today. Have you ever felt that before?

THE MODERATOR: Like a negative reaction.

MARTA KOSTYUK: Of the people or from the players?

Q. Just from people in general being Ukraine and things like that? Second question: Also, about Russian and Belarusian athletes, some of them may be afraid of speaking out because of their family or whatever. What do you think of that? I think someone like Kasatkina has been a bit clearer about

her stance than Sabalenka. Do you accept that, or do you still think that more should be done?

MARTA KOSTYUK: I don't know. I feel like people support me in different tournaments, and I just want to show my best and to play tennis and people to support me playing tennis when I play tennis.

What happened today, I have to say, I didn't expect it. I did not, but I have no reaction to it. People should be honestly embarrassed, but this is not my call.

I don't know. I feel fine. On the social media after my statements I have a lot of negative reactions, but I deleted most of my -- deleted almost all social media from my phone. I don't read anything. I close the comments, and I don't want to -- honestly I don't. I'm full of this shit that people say. It doesn't make sense, so I just skip that.

About Sabalenka and Kasatkina, I think Kasatkina made her statement, and she's not going back to Russia, and that's her choice. I can see that she really -- she gave up something that's important for her to -- I don't know how to say -- to stay on the side of the truth and of the kindness and love, I think.

I don't know what other players are afraid of. I go back to Ukraine where I can die any second from drones or missiles or whatever it is, and I try to go back there as much as I can. I just don't have time for it really.

And what are they afraid of, honestly? Most of the players who have been -- there are a lot of players who have financial possibilities to even take their families away, but for some reason they don't do it, and I was forced to do it, you know.

Yeah, as I said, I don't respect this. I don't know. No one ever -- we are an individual sport, and there is, like, five Ukrainian girls in top 100. It's not that tough, when the war began, to come and talk to us for a couple of minutes and to, I don't know, say anything. But it was just mouths shut, eyes in the ground, and they walk and they don't say anything.

I don't understand. I see these players every single week in the locker room, and they don't have the audacity to come up and talk to me for 15 months already. I'm not sure if they will now. I will look. Okay. I will accept it because it's been a little bit a lot of time already since the war began.

I don't know. I think, no matter what I say, I think it's a job of journalists to change the questions that have been asked these players. Every time is the same question, and you will get always the same answer. You shouldn't ask me all these things because they can give you answers if you ask right questions.

Q. Marta, some weeks ago all of you called the heads of the WTA to discuss this problem. Has it moved somewhere? When will you have other meetings, and what's on your agenda?

MARTA KOSTYUK: We actually had a call right when I was in Kyiv. And yeah, after the call we figured out that there is nothing changed really, and everyone is just defensive, as they've been since the beginning of this whole thing. I don't know why they are so afraid of us.

We sent a couple of emails, really rough ones, strong ones. We got their reply that we are working on it, we want to help you in the best way we can, and nothing changed.

I don't know when is going to be the next call, and I just feel like we've tried all the possible things we could try. I just hope that, you know -- because I don't feel like there is anything left in our power to do something with the WTA and ATP directly. I mean, it's impossible.

I just hope that someone like U.K., for example, will just not grant visas and they will not be able to enter the country, and they will not play. As of now I think this is the only reasonable idea because we are a little bit -- we did everything.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports