

Roland Garros

Wednesday, 31 May 2023

Paris, France

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference

A. SABALENKA/I. Shymanovich

7-5, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, another really solid match for you today out on Lenglen. Just talk us through your thoughts on the match and what you thought you did well today as well.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, super happy to get this win. I think the first set I didn't play my best, and I'm super happy that no matter what I was able to stay calm and I was able to fight for every point to get this win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English, please.

Q. I'm just curious now that you've had two matches under your belt at a slam as a reigning slam champion, how does the levels of stress and everything compare to life before?

ARYNA SABALENKA: It's still the same. You still want to do well, and you get nervous a little bit sometimes. So it's the same. The only one different is that you are able to stay calm and to just think clear and just to, yeah, do your best and try your best no matter what.

Q. How familiar were you with Iryna and her game coming into the match?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, of course, we watched her previous matches here at Roland Garros. I know her quite well since very young age, so I knew that she's a great fighter. So it's going to be tough battle against her. So I prepared myself as good as I can.

Yeah, just happy with this win.

Q. Two questions: First, about this application against hate. You know, it was prepared for Roland Garros. Do you use this application in social media? And the second, you will play in the next round against Frech from Poland or Rakhimova. What do you know about your next opponent?

THE MODERATOR: The tournament has an app for players for social media that stops the --



ROLAND-GARROS

ARYNA SABALENKA: Ah, yes. Okay, I saw that in the car, but actually I didn't use it. I mean, I faced a lot of hate in the past years, so I'm, like, okay, whatever. If people want to throw this to me, I'm happy to help them.

So I didn't use this app, but I'm really happy that we have something like that, for example, for young players who are just coming to the tour, who just start playing.

To be honest, I don't want them to face this hate, so it's really good to have.

The second one, I think I never played against Rakhimova or Frech, but I saw a lot of games for them. No matter whom I face, I think it's going to be a great battle. Yeah, I'm looking forward for the next match.

Q. Aryna, just a quick question about Netflix because the first five episodes you weren't obviously in them, but obviously we all saw the cameras were following you around for a lot of last season, so I assume this next episode drop will feature you quite heavily. But I'm curious when they were filming and you agreed to do it, you didn't know what was going to happen this year and you didn't know what was even going to happen last year. So what do you think people are going to see? What do you think now looking back on filming all that it's going to show people?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, actually, when they start following me, it wasn't the best season in my life. I was thinking, like, okay, what are people going to see, a lot of drama in that episode.

Then, I saw a little bit of my episode, and I think it's going to be interesting for people to get to know me, to get to know my story and how tough it is to face such interesting challenges and how we're dealing with a lot of things and how a lot of things affect us. So I think it's going to be interesting to see me from another side.

I'm always positive. I'm smiling a lot. At the same time on the court I'm very aggressive, but there is also small part of Aryna who can be a little over-worried about things, you know, so it's going to be interesting. I'm really, I don't know -- I'm nervous about that episode and how people are going to react. I hope they will like it, and I hope they will understand a little bit better.

Q. A little bit in that vein, obviously there's a lot of



... when all is said, we're done.®

problems with social media and things that can be fixed, but I was actually talking to Yuli Putintseva, and she feels grateful for social media because --

ARYNA SABALENKA: Who?

Q. Yulia Putintseva. It allowed fans to see a different side of her, that she's not maybe necessarily the intense character that she is on court all the time. I wonder if you ever had experiences like that. Because you can be fairly intense and competitive on court, but also very fun and silly off the court. Do you feel like you've had fans say, Oh, I saw your social media and got a different side of you?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I'm actually really happy to have social media. I use it to show people different me. You know, not only all the time aggressive Aryna. For example, after the match, they will think, oh, my God, how crazy she is, and then they're going to watch my social media thinking, probably she's not that crazy. It's just like her passion for tennis.

That's really great to have and show people your real personality. Yeah, I don't know. Did I answer your question? Okay. (Laughing.)

Q. I want to ask you two questions. First, it's about Belarus. Then in 2020 you signed a letter to support Lukashenko, in times when he was torturing and beating up protestants in the street. And then eventually you showed up celebrating the new year with him. How is it possible that the potential World No. 1 supports a dictator and --

ARYNA SABALENKA: I have no comments to you, so thank you for your question.

Q. The second question is, you keep saying that nobody supports war, nobody, but can you speak for yourself and say: I, Aryna Sabalenka, flatly condemn the fact that Belarus is attacking Ukraine with missiles, and I want it to stop?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I've got no comments to you.

Q. So you basically support everything because you cannot speak up? You're not a small person, Aryna. You can --

THE MODERATOR: She's made it clear that she's not going to answer.

ARYNA SABALENKA: First of all, yes.

Q. Now we know everything. It's all clear.

ARYNA SABALENKA: You've got enough answers from me, and I've got no comments to you.

Q. It's all clear to us.

THE MODERATOR: Next question. Thank you.

Q. Just a question regarding the night sessions here. Tomorrow is Monfils against Rune, and it's the fourth time in four days that it's a men's match. How do you comment on that?

THE MODERATOR: Every night session so far has been a men's match. What are your thoughts?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know, actually. I'm not following the schedule. I think Monfils, he's French, and I would expect that they're going to put him on the night session so more people can come and enjoy his game. So I think that's something you expect.

Q. Are you keen on playing night sessions for yourself?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I'm happy to play first match or I'm happy to play night session, as long as it's not the last match. Not before 7, I'm happy to play. I would play not before 7, yeah.

Q. You were talking about social media before, and I just wonder, how has your experience with social media changed in the last year, 16 months since the war began in Ukraine? Have you received more hate, would you say? Is that something that you've noticed, an increase in you maybe getting more trolling online because of your nationality?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, it's been really tough. When everything started, of course, I received a lot of hate, a lot of questions. A lot, you know, from people.

But it's something I expect. I'm trying to stay away from the negative side of social media, and I'm focusing on people who are really interested in my life, who are interested in my career, and in my personality.

As I said before, there is going to be a lot of people who hate you, and it's going to be a lot of people who like you, so I'm focusing on the positive.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports