

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference

A. SABALENKA/E. Svitolina

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THE MODERATOR: Aryna, you're into the semifinals here at Roland Garros. You must be pleased with your performance today. Just talk us through what you were most happy with.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, it was very tough match. Yeah, I'm super happy with the win.

Yeah, just super happy to be in another semifinal.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. At the end of the match, you went over to the net, and you waited for Elina to come over but you knew she wasn't going to shake your hand. Why did you do that?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. It just was an instinct like I always do after all my matches.

Q. One question about one matter that interest fans in our country. You said many times in last months that you would like to separate sports from politics, and we understand that. But, the Internet never forgets. We can find in Internet many photos of you and Alexander Lukashenko. The question is: Why you could connect sport and politics in the past and now you are against this connection?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, we played a lot of Fed Cups in Belarus. He was in our matches taking pictures with us after the match. Nothing bad was happening that time in Belarus or in Ukraine or in Russia.

And I said it many times already, I'm not supporting war. I don't want my country to be involved in any conflict. I said it many times, and you know where I stand, you know. You have my position. You have my answer. I answered it many times. I'm not supporting the war.

And the thing that I don't want sport to be involved in politics, because I'm just a tennis player, 25-years-old tennis player. And if I would like to be political I wouldn't be here. I don't want to be involved in any politics. I just



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want to be a tennis player.

Q. What effect has last Wednesday's press conference had on you over the past week?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Just the way I was made feeling and I felt disrespected. I felt like journalist try to put the words in my mouth. I didn't feel comfortable. This is just the way I felt. Yeah. That's it.

Q. You say you don't support war. But do you still support Alexander Lukashenko?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Like it's a tough question. I mean, I don't support war, meaning I don't support Lukashenko right now.

Q. Congratulations on your tournament so far. In your on-court interview you complimented the crowd. It was an incredible atmosphere throughout the match for both of you and very fair. Obviously there were some boos for Elina as she left the court. I just wondered whether you were surprised by that, what your emotional reaction to hearing that was?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I think she didn't deserve all this boos. I think, I mean, I'm giving such a big respect to her what she's doing after giving birth. It's impressive and I'm really impressed by what she's doing. I give big respect to her.

Q. You have lots of fans around the world. They call you the Warrior Princess. In what ways are you a warrior? In what ways are you a princess? What will it take for you to become the queen here at Roland Garros?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I think I'm just, I mean, I really feel, I'm really thankful for people to call me that way. I just feel like I'm a fighter, and it's not like separation. It's just like I'm a warrior princess meaning like I'm a great fighter.

I mean, I don't know, to become queen in Roland Garros, I just have to keep focusing on myself, on my game, and try to bring my best tennis every time I'm on the court.

Q. Can you explain the difference between now, today, coming in over here, and not coming in after the previous two matches?

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ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, I always really respect press conference. I'm always open in my answers. I really felt bad not coming here. I couldn't sleep. Like all those bad feelings was in my head, I couldn't fall asleep. I felt really bad not coming here. I really respect all of you guys. Thank you so much for coming here, for being interested in me.

Yeah, I just felt so bad not coming here.

Q. You said before the match against Marta in the first round that kind of the circumstances around it made you more nervous, a bit more tense. Was it the same today, or did it feel different?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I felt different. I was just focusing on myself and nothing else. Just try to bring my best tennis on court. Yeah, it was a bit different.

Q. Obviously quite a bit of attention here now, maybe perhaps as a result of you not attending the last two press conferences. Looking back, do you regret that decision? How are you feeling mentally now?

ARYNA SABALENKA: No, I don't regret the decisions. I felt really disrespected, and I felt really bad. I mean, Grand Slam, it's enough pressure to handle, and I just tried to focus on myself, on my game.

I really hope that you guys will understand me, my feelings. You know that I really respect all of you, and I always open. You can ask whatever you want. You will get all the information.

But in the last press conference, I felt like my press conference became a political TV show, and I'm not expert in politics. I'm just a tennis player.

Yeah, I just need to step back and just bring focus on my tennis and on my game. Yeah, and I feel good that I did it and I feel sorry for you guys that you didn't have chance to chat with me. But I'm here today, and I am ready to give answers for every question you have.

Q. I asked Elina this, whether she felt like it gave you an advantage because she was here and has answered a lot of difficult questions, and you hadn't done that for the last few days. Do you feel like it gave you any kind of advantage of not having to face this over the last few days?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, I think I handled a lot of pressure on the press conference, like political pressure on the press conference over my last interviews I did, and I think it's not gave me any advantage because I felt really bad and I couldn't sleep well. And I think this is not the key way I won this match today.

Q. You said after your press conference a few days ago you didn't feel safe in that press conference. Today you have been asked questions about politics and what's happening. Do you feel safe today?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yes, I do.

Q. Why?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I think probably because I had few days to switch off from the press conference, few days to bring myself together, few days to realize couple of things. Yeah, that's why I feel safer. And nobody's putting words in my mouth, so that's another reason.

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