

National Bank Open

Monday, August 8, 2022

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Serena Williams

Press Conference



S. WILLIAMS/N. Parrizas Diaz

6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Nice win out there. How would you assess your play?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Listen, I was happy to win a match, it's been so long. So, yeah, that was my assessment.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. (Question about success here and what does this win mean.)

SERENA WILLIAMS: I mean it's just one win, you know, it takes a lot. But I was happy, like I said, to have a win. It's been a very long time. I forgot what it felt like.

Q. Tennis fans in Toronto were pretty ecstatic when they found out both you and your sister would be coming back to play here again. Can you talk us through the process and how they got so lucky to have both of you back here given how little we've been able to see you play in the last year or so?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, it was just good placement and timing. Like I said, I didn't even know if I would be back here in Toronto.

Yeah, it just kind of worked out. It was like, Okay, I want to play a few more matches, and Toronto was just there and it was perfect. And I absolutely love playing here, clearly. So yeah, it worked out.

Q. Do you and Venus talk about that at all beforehand? Do you push each other or draw each other near to come to an event when you know the other one's going to come back at that same time sort of?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Honestly, we don't talk a lot of tennis. I think after a hundred years of talking tennis together we just, that's like a subject we don't talk about

anymore really.

But, yeah, but it's good to just be around. And when she's around it's just, it's cool. I mean, she's Venus Williams.

Q. This tournament's sort of been billed by some as a clash between a number of established stars like yourself, former world No. 1s, I guess a generation of new and upcoming talents. I was wondering if you buy into that premise and I guess what sort of appeals specifically about Toronto to you and perhaps Venus as well.

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, it is definitely that. I feel like it's a lot of past winners and just champions in general of the tour. And then some really exciting young new champions that are coming and going to take over. And that's exciting.

So, yeah, I don't remember what, the second part of your question.

Q. You spoke on court and I think it's been addressed sort of, but I guess if there's anything about Toronto that specifically appeals to you and Venus when you come back playing in front of this crowd?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I don't know. I just love it here. It's no secret that I've had a fabulous time on court and probably even better time off court here in Toronto.

So it's a great city and I love being here. I used to visit here all the time, visit my friends, great memories.

Q. At this point in your career or your life what is it that continues to drive you or keeps you hungry in this sport?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I don't know. I guess there's just a light at the end of the tunnel. (Laughing) I don't know, I'm guess closer to the light, so... (laughing).

Yeah, so that's, like lately that's been it for me. I can't wait to get to that light.

Q. I know you're joking, but can you --



SERENA WILLIAMS: I'm not joking.

Q. Okay. So then explain to me what the light is to you, what the light represents.

SERENA WILLIAMS: Freedom. Yeah. I love playing though, so it's like amazing. But, you know, I can't do this forever.

So it's just like sometimes you just want to try your best to enjoy the moments and do the best that you can.

Q. How did you feel out there for yourself, like physically and mentally being able to compete the way you did? And you also had a bunch of runs where the crowd was really on your side and you really had people on their feet. Some people were even bowing out there.

SERENA WILLIAMS: Wow, I didn't see that, but that's incredible. I feel good. I felt like I competed well today and I think that's what I needed to do is just to compete.

Mentally I feel I'm getting there. I'm not where I normally am and I'm not where I want to be. But I think any match that I play, whether I win or lose, it helps me get there mentally. Because I haven't played a lot in the last year, two years. So I think that that really helps me.

Physically I feel much better in practice, it's just like getting that to the court. But literally I'm the kind of person who it just takes one or two things and then it clicks. So I'm just waiting on that to click.

Q. There's a video of Olympia giving you several high-fives downstairs after the win. Especially where she is, at the age she is now, what does it mean to you to, I think she's creating some memories now of being able to know that you're on court and seeing you do your work, what does it mean to you to have that moment with her and what advice is Olympia giving you pre-match?

SERENA WILLIAMS: You know, she's never like sat at my match. So I was super excited.

I looked over and I saw her in the first middle of the first set and I was like, Oh, my God, why is she here? And then I went into mom mode, like, does she have on her sun cream.

I was like, Okay, Serena, should I say something like, Take her upstairs to the suite. Because she never like, she's never been to my match.

So it's kind of cool that it happened in Toronto but I didn't expect it. But I was like, Okay Serena, just let go and enjoy this. It was good for her to have that memory. I mean, it's pretty cool. And she's never had it because I've always kept her away. And I'm so happy that she came out there and so it was good.

She doesn't give me a lot of advice before the match because, you know, she just has a lot of fun. This kid has a lot of fun. But honestly it was really cool. And I was like really happy.

And then I was like, Okay, no racquet smashing (laughing) stay calm. Yeah.

Q. I was wondering if you could describe, as the greatest player of all time, what is going through your mind during the breaks that you get in between the games. Like not just the match here but like in general along the years.

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, no, I try to stay in the moment. And I think there's a reason that they use that expression. You know, because I've had a wonderful career.

So for me it's just like, Okay, how do I tap into that and really just truly having that self belief. I think that's super important.

Like I said, it's just been tricky because I haven't played in so long. And then getting a little glimpse here or there you can see that it's there and just having to just let it click. And once that clicks I think it will feel better.

Q. Throughout the week a lot of young players have talked about how you've had an impact on their careers and influenced them growing up. What's it like seeing them have success, like Coco, Iga and Leylah, and how does it feel to you to know that you've had kind of some kind of impact in their development and the future of women's tennis?

SERENA WILLIAMS: It's great to have an impact, I think, in anyone's life. Because people had an impact in my life. And I know what it felt like to just want to be like that and to be better.

So that's, it's a good feeling to just have other people feel that way about you. And, yeah, and just encourage them to be better. Because that's what it's all about, right? It's about making your mark and then someone else does and does better and that's kind of how it keeps going.

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