

National Bank Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



the city of Toronto for a few days, have you had any chance to explore any sights and sounds, or has it been kind of pretty much business?

A. SABALENKA/Yuan Yue

6-2, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Who has the first question?

Q. Just initially your thoughts on your performance tonight and the match as a whole.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I wouldn't say that I played my best tennis, but I was there and, no matter what, I was fighting for every point. I'm really happy that I was able to stay focused no matter what and to keep pushing, even though I didn't feel my best on court. Yeah, anyway, super happy to get this win and can't wait to play the next match.

Q. How are you feeling now, like with one tournament in your pocket and now a match here, just with coming back with the injury and everything and playing, how is your shoulder feeling, how much has the recovery process changed for you, if you can kind of talk through that.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, that's actually, yeah, that's a different experience, and I really hope that I'm not going to experience that more in my career. That's been really tricky to play the first tournament, because you are overprotective, you're trying to kind of like not to overdo stuff, you are protecting your shoulder, and I think that's create more tension.

I was super sore in Washington, and coming here, yeah, we did a lot of recovery, a lot of mobility stretches. A lot of time I'm spending on extra mobility, on extra stretches, some treatment. Now I feel much better with my shoulder, I realize that I don't have to protect it, that it's done, it's clean, I can go for it without fear that I can get injured again. Right now I feel more free on court and nothing bothering me there and it's out of my mind, so it means that I can stay focused on the game and just compete and do my best.

Q. You got here obviously a handful of days ago and started on Thursday. Just your thoughts of being in

ARYNA SABALENKA: I was able to go to couple of good restaurants, you know (laughing). That's the only thing, it looks like the only thing I do is eat, eating, yeah. Yeah, but it's been pretty busy, and I'm happy that I had these extra days to recover, to recharge, to feel the courts, and to go to good places to enjoy good food and, yeah, but overall, yeah, it's been pretty much business.

Q. I think it was actually two years ago at this very same tournament that you decided to see a biomechanic and try to remake your serve.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah.

Q. That process of doing that mid season, trying to change something that you've done basically your entire life, how difficult was that to do that in the middle of the season?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I was so desperate for trying to find something what's going to help me to fix my serve, so at that point I was ready to do whatever. If he would just tell me to do sky diving and it was going to help fix my serve, I would go for it, you know, whatever crazy things they would tell me to do, just to fix that craziness, you know? So, but it's a tough process, it's tough to open up for something new, like completely new, and to change the whole motion on your serve, to change the mentality on the serve. It was very tough process, but it's all paid back, and I'm really happy that we made that decision and I think it was the best decision in my career.

Q. You've defended titles in the past, but this year you went into Australia and you got to defend your Australian Open title. Did it feel any different going into a slam knowing that for the first time you were the defending champion?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, I would say maybe it was kind of like more pressure and expectations on me, but as an experienced player I was able just to shift my focus on the tennis and just forget about being a defending champion, forget about the Grand Slam or anything, and



just try to bring my best tennis every time out on the court.
Yeah, that's it.

Yeah, it was tough for the first matches, but then I remind myself that I have to focus on myself, otherwise I'll be not able to play my best.

Q. Last year I think right around this time there was a lot of, in terms of motivation for you, there was like a No. 1 ranking, there was US Open, there was year-end No. 1, all this sort of stuff. Maybe a slightly different mentality now, I don't know, but I'm curious how different it does feel kind of going into the back end of the season this year compared to last year, and whether or not, do you still have small goals, are you better with small goals, or are you better with big goals, like long-term goals?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I'm better without goals, you know (laughing). I guess, yeah, I guess small goals. I'm just trying to improve my game, and I'm just trying to focus step by step and be kind of like in the moment and trying to do everything I can in the moment with what I have.

Tennis is tricky, you know, you can feel completely different every day and you just have to work through it. Yeah, compared to the last year, it's completely different situation, completely different, I would say. I mean, even ranking-wise, and last Grand Slam I wasn't able to play, it's different things, as I said, I'm working through, you know?

But as I said, I'm good with the small goals, and the big goals, I think everyone have the same goals, like it's just, you know, it's so obvious, we all, yeah, we all have the big goals, but I think the key is to focus on the small goals, small steps.

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