

# US OPEN

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New York, New York, USA

## Aryna Sabalenka

### Press Conference

A. SABALENKA/Z. Qinwen

6-1, 6-4

**THE MODERATOR:** Straight sets, an hour and 13 minutes. You move on now. Just your thoughts on your performance today, which was simply outstanding.

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** Yeah, I'm super happy with the level I played today. Super happy with this win. I saw her previous matches. She played unbelievable tennis, and I'm super happy that I was able to bring my level on court and finish this match in two sets.

**THE MODERATOR:** Questions.

**Q. Despite her trying to raise her level in the second set and adjusting to your pace, you still were able to close her out and save energy. Can you just talk about how you went through that second set. What is the difference from the Aryna who is so friendly and personable off the court from the warrior princess that you are on the court?**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** I mean, yes, in the second set she start playing better, serving better. I mean, I kind of expect that, because after first set it was, like, nothing to lose for her, she start playing a little bit more aggressive.

Yeah, it was a little tricky, and I'm super happy that even though she was serving really well, I was able to break her serve for once, and it was enough for that set. I'm super happy that even though she tried to play more aggressive, I was able to keep my level and was able to, yeah, as I said, win this match in two sets and didn't give her much opportunities.

And about the different... I don't know. I mean, tennis is something I really love, and it's something what I really want to do well. I don't want to be this friendly, happy person on court. I want to get this win and then after the match I know that I can be me.

Yeah, I think that's why it's, like, different people on and off



the court (smiling).

**Q. You are from a country that's known for being very cold, and yet you live in Miami. Has living in Miami helped deal with conditions like this? Is this just normal for you to go out and play in this weather? I mean, what was it like out there today?**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** I mean, it was hot, but yeah, because I did my preparation in Florida. I mean, what can be worse than Florida? (Laughter.) I mean, in July and June, you know. Not like overall.

So yeah, I think that's really help me today to, yeah, to stay strong and to, like, don't really get tired because of the heat.

**Q. You said earlier how much you like the atmosphere and appreciated it. If Keys wins tonight, how much will that bother you that you know that she will probably get the support? Is that a problem, or do you just understand?**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** No, really I understand. Of course they will support her more than me. I had this experience playing on the stadiums where people were supporting my opponents. So it's not gonna bother me anyhow. I mean, I'll just try to stay focused and try to play my best tennis.

I know that I have my team in the box. I have my friends in the stadium who is cheering for me. I have my family, and it's enough for me.

But, I mean, if they're gonna cheer for me more than for her, I'll be really appreciating. Thank you. (Laughter.)

**Q. Tennis players have to make so many hard choices over the course of their career. Can you remember a decision that you made that at the time felt really difficult but when you look back on you think, wow, I'm really glad I made that decision?**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** My decision?

**Q. Yeah.**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** I think bringing biomechanics guy in my team was really, not like difficult decision, but it was



just different for me. Because before I wasn't really open for these kind of things. I'm super happy and proud of myself that I was able to open myself for, like, new stuff, which is really helped me to fix my serve and help me to get stronger on court.

**Q. For the second straight match, your opponent was standing so far back to return your serve. First of all, what is it like to serve against that? Also, after your serving struggles last year, how satisfying is it to see that your opponents are maybe a bit scared of your serve now?**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** I mean, yeah, seeing them, like, doing these adjustments, it give me a little more, not like confidence, but understanding they kind of like trying to figure out how to return my serve. I'm not, like, really scared of this position. They can return my serve and they can play points on my serve, that's not something really making me scared.

I mean, that's just different, but at the same time it's open more angles, and it's not like there is no way to play against this return position.

**Q. As a returner, have you ever tried to stand far back to return serves?**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** Yeah, yeah, sometimes I do that as well. All depends on the opponents' serve. Sometimes I can step in; sometimes I can go back. Yeah, that's kind of, like, normal, I think.

**Q. You have reached the semifinals of all four majors this season now. What does that show about your consistency, all courts, all tournaments, all conditions?**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** Yeah, I'm super proud of myself and my team that we have been able to adjust to different conditions, different courts. We were able to bring this consistency in my game.

Yeah, this is something I'm really proud of, and it's just unbelievable and I'm just super happy right now that I'm being able to do this.

**Q. You have had this incredible year. Australia was the triumph, the celebration. France was really tough, from what I could tell, just a tough run there.**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** France, you said?

**Q. The French Open where there was controversy that was there. Now you have sort of been a little bit under**

**the radar here. Can you just talk about the emotions of this year, sort of the ins and outs and how you've handled that, please.**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** Yeah, as I said before, yeah, I had a couple of really tough losses this year, but as I said, we're not losing; we're learning.

I just have really strong belief that all those tough matches that I lost will help me in the future in another tough matches, another tough battles.

Yeah, as I said, I'm just learning and I'm just getting more experience and getting stronger. It's been tough. Yeah, it's been really tough. But yeah, I mean, I just had couple days off and get back to practicing and getting back to getting stronger.

**Q. Your team was in here yesterday. I don't remember which one of us asked, but someone asked about how they'll handle your position changing from chasing the No. 1 to becoming the person who's chased. Jason said, Be careful when you try to put a predator in a corner.**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** Be careful when you try to put what?

**Q. A predator in a corner. Try and chase a predator, see what happens. I'm sure referring to your tattoo and the tiger.**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** Okay, got it.

**Q. I'm curious if you agree with that assessment and what you think that means from your perspective.**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** Jason is just coming from the, how to say, like, he's a fighter, like, jujitsu, and they really like to talk a lot. (Laughter.)

But, I mean, I would say that they're not focusing on the ranking. Like, this is just sport. You know, like, we are here pushing each other to the limits, and we're here getting better every day.

You know, I'm super happy with this achievement in my career, but, I mean, it's not a big change. You know, I mean, I have been No. 2. Now I'm No. 1. It's just a difference of position in the draw. I still have to bring my best tennis. I still have to play my best. People will try to, yeah, just try to chase me and get me.

But it just an extra motivation for me. You know, seeing them, like, really trying their best to beat me, it's, like, an

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

extra power and energy for me to keep playing, keep pushing, keep getting better.

**Q. Are you allowing yourself to think what might be on Saturday?**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** I mean, I think that's normal. I think when you get to this last stages of the tournament, anyway, you're going to think about what if, what I want, what I would like, and you're, like, dreaming.

Yeah, I'm not trying to block the stats, because when you're trying to block something, it's going to keep getting in your head and it's can get really annoying. When you're not trying to block it, it actually goes away, you know.

I know that I have to do my job. I have to go on court. I have to play my best tennis. I have to fight for it. I know that if I'll be there, if I'll be fighting for my dream, I know that I can get it. So I'm, like, I'm not trying to block these stats.

**Q. Did you tell yourself at any point either before the match or during the match you're the No. 1 player in the world, do what you're supposed to do here? Does that cycle through your mind at all? Some people can use it as motivation and power.**

**ARYNA SABALENKA:** Not yet (smiling). I have been -- I mean, I'm not No. 1 yet. Officially not yet.

I just, after really tough last season, I just keep telling myself and reminding myself that I have been through really tough situation, and, I mean, I can handle anything. That's really helps me to stay strong and to motivate me.

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