

US OPEN

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Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/M. Keys

0-6, 7-6, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Heart of a champion. How proud of yourself are you after that match?

ARYNA SABALENKA: It was really incredible match. She played unbelievable tennis. And, I mean, I'm really proud of myself that I was able to turn around this game and get this win, because it was just incredible, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Can you talk us through just what was going on in your mind through that first set and second set? And when maybe things started to click for you, what did you say to yourself to kind of let it all go and try and get yourself back into that match?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, it was crazy. I was all over the place. I was just, like, what can I do? Like, she's playing unbelievable, just, like, crushing everything.

I'm not able to do anything, like, I had zero control in the match. I was just, like, I was just keep telling myself, I mean, okay, there is going to be this like this? Somebody going to just play their best tennis?

You just have to keep trying, keep staying there, and keep pushing it. Maybe you'll be able to turn around this game.

Lucky me, somehow magically, I don't know how I was able to turn around this game.

Q. You have obviously had a lot of difficult semifinals where you have had to deal with comebacks. How satisfying is it to be on the other side and to have a comeback like this and maybe exorcise some of those demons?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Obviously I was keep reminding myself that I lost a lot of tough matches. I mean, one day all those matches should just, like, help me somehow.

This kind of, like, thinking help me to stay in the game and give me some hope that I'll be able to turn around this match that, the match is not over until the last point and that I just have to keep fighting, keep trying to find my rhythm, my game, just find myself.

Magically I finally found the game, and I was able to turn around this match and to get this win.

Q. Can you prepare for those situations in practice, or is it just something you have to go through in a match?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, honestly there is no better practice than a match. That's why we are playing all those tournaments before the US Open so we have this chance to practice all those tough situations before the slam on another events.

But in the practice, you can just, you can try to put yourself in these situations, like start playing, I don't know, whatever, like set from 1-4 down and try to win the set. You get something for that.

I don't know. You can, like, somehow put yourself in this position, but there is no better practice than a match. Yeah, you just have to practice it in the tournaments before the slam.

Q. Is this the best comeback win that you think that you have had considering the circumstances? Did the delay of the first match and those unusual circumstances maybe contribute towards that start for you in the first set?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Not really. During that delay, I was telling myself that, I mean, you cannot control it. So I wasn't really, like, wasting my energy on that. I was with my team. We had conversations, so everything was fine. I think just, like, she played incredible tennis.

I think about comebacks. Last year I had incredible comeback from 1-5 against Kanepi. But all of those comebacks are different. This one definitely was one of the best ones (smiling).

I'm really proud that I was able to turn around this match.



Q. You already have a win over Coco this year. What will you focus on going into the final?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I mean, honestly I would say that she played much better than in that match, when was that, Indian Wells? She improved a lot. So it's a different player. We don't like really thinking about that match.

Going into this final, I think I just have to focus on myself and prepare myself for another fight. No matter what, just keep fighting and keep playing my best and do my best. You know, like, there is nothing much you can, what else can you do? You just have to be there and you have to fight for it.

Q. A match against another American on Ashe, so you know already what it's going to be like.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Of course I would prefer have someone else or crowd would be, like, a little bit probably like same to both players (smiling), but, I mean, today's match I think gonna help me in the finals, because I mean, I'll be fine with this support. I'll be all right.

I'll still hoping, I'm still hoping that probably some of them will be supporting me. Will be just a little bit. Just sometimes, please. Please. (Laughter.)

Q. What makes Coco Gauff a difficult opponent to face? What do you think having been through the experience at the Australian and playing in a Grand Slam final and winning it will help you this weekend?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Coco, the first question. I mean, she's moving really well. She's hungry. She kind of like have nothing to lose. She knows that crowd going to support her. I think that's what makes her really difficult opponent. Also serving really well.

I think Australian Open final will definitely help me with all those emotions I went through in that final. I'll be different in this final. I mean, I don't know. It's too late. I can't speak, guys. Really, I'm like losing it after each word I'm saying.

But definitely that final gonna help me, because I know which kind of, like, emotions expect. I know how to handle them.

So I think that final gonna help me, like, emotionally gonna help me.

Q. Finish lines are really powerful thing. There is a lot of research, psychology around, if finish lines are

moved, how difficult it is to continue. I know you joked about it after the match a little bit on court, but when you thought the match had ended, how did you get yourself back into the match to play those final, you know, three points?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Honestly, I was thinking that if I'm going to lose this semifinal, I'll be struggling with sleeping for I don't know how many days, and I was just, like, I don't want this to happen. I need some sleep, and I need to be fine, you know, (smiling).

I was just, like, come on, keep trying, keep pushing, like, I don't know, do something extra. Just try to turn around this match. I think this kind of thinking really helped me to stay in the game and to keep trying, keep pushing, to still have this belief that I have a chance to turn around this match.

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