

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

## Sorana Cirstea

Press Conference



S. CIRSTEIA/A. Sabalenka

6-4, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Can you share your thoughts on the match today what this win means to you.

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Yes, I'm very happy with the win. I mean, I had confidence in my game. I knew I was playing well, and I knew that if I come out swinging and being aggressive, I have my chance, and that's exactly what I did today.

Of course I'm very happy to get the win against Aryna, because she's been playing great lately. She's probably one of the two, three best in-form players. Of course this gives me a lot of confidence.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. We noticed several times throughout the match that Aryna was putting an ice pack on her head and sitting down, putting a towel over her head. You could tell she was struggling with the heat. You looked calm. Couldn't tell you were sweating out there. What was it like out there? Could you tell she was struggling, and were you maybe trying to take advantage of maybe her fatigue a little bit?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: To be honest, no, I did not realize. I'm quite lucky throughout my career, I never had problems with the heat. I never cramp. I don't know what it is. I never had any issues regarding that.

So I think I am quite lucky. I like playing in the heat. I don't mind at all. So I think today, for me, it was just another day at the job. Of course I think it's definite advantage, and throughout the years I never really paid attention to it. But lately I'm starting to realize that I'm a bit better than most of the girls with playing in the heat.

**Q. You were talking earlier in the week about Thomas and how you talk about looking at your opponent. What did you see in her game today that you were able to exploit? You looked very calm in some of those**

**tense moments when there was breakpoints and so on. Did you get nervous at all thinking this was a semifinal opportunity?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Yeah, I mean, I knew mostly the way Aryna plays, like she has a very, very aggressive game. So I knew coming in today I had to be aggressive, because as soon as you give her space, if you back up a little bit, I think you are done.

I think I'm lucky, because I can do both. I can attack and I can defend as well. Mostly I prefer to attack. But I knew I had to come out swinging, and I had to be strong at the beginning, because once she gets that first few games, you know she's going to be on a roll, she starts swinging more and more and it's definitely difficult.

So I think today the main thing was for me to be aggressive, not let her dictate the points, be solid, big targets, and yeah, serve well. Unfortunately I wasn't serving that good, but on the important points the serve helped me quite a bit.

**Q. Just to pick up what you said about the serve, I thought on the ad side, the T serve, you really hurt her on some big points there. Your coach had a great serve too. Was there anything you two have been working on in terms of the serve? How important is it when you face such a massive hitter as her to be able to hold as well as you did in tough points?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Yes, I think the serve, it has been a big talk with my coach. Last year after US Open I stopped my season due to a shoulder injury. I had two months of rehab.

Once that shoulder started to feel a little bit better, we started working on the serve. Of course we couldn't work as much as we wanted. Came into Australia with still a bit of pain. But we worked a lot, because I always felt that my serve is below my game.

I mean, I'm quite a tall girl. Okay, I'm not very big, I'm not built very big, but still with my height, I should be able to hit the serves a bit stronger.



So we have been trying to improve a little bit the speed. It hasn't worked that much, so then we said, okay, let's try to improve the placement.

So of course we have been working a lot on that, and that was also on my mind, because as soon as I got the shoulder stronger, I said, Okay, we have to make my serve a weapon, because there is no way why my serve cannot be a weapon with my height.

**Q. Today you are in a semifinal after ten years. Can you tell us what was the process like to reach the level you have now? How did you make use of this process in this match against the No. 2 in the world?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Again, like I said many times, I don't know much about numbers and results, and I don't keep track. I think as a player you try to just focus more on the work rather than on the mathematical rankings and all that on paper.

So I think I have always been a good player. I have always been a dangerous player. I have always had a big game, but sometimes I lacked a bit of consistency. So I would have, let's say, three, four months when I was playing really well, and then drop the level and then come back again.

I think, like I said, I have had, even if let's say on paper it looks like it's ten years, but in these ten years I feel like I have had great results as well and periods where I was playing very, very well.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to keep that level the whole year. So we are working on that, you know. Like I said, it's always a puzzle, and now all those things are starting to, all the pieces are starting to come together.

**Q. When you consider the way Sabalenka has played so far this year and the size of this tournament, where would you rate this result?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: It's hard. It's hard for me personally to rate certain results comparing to others, but I think this result shows the work that I put in, because in the last couple of months I worked really, really hard.

Not just these results, because up to here I beat quite good players as well. So of course coming against Aryna, a Grand Slam champion and a finalist last week, and her game, it is very, very aggressive, I mean, I'm a fan of aggressive games, so I really like her game, I wouldn't know where to put this match. But definitely I think it's joy and a relief in the same time that all the work is paying off.

**Q. I see that next week is your birthday?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Yes.

**Q. Happy Birthday almost.**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Thank you so much.

**Q. It appears, I don't cover a lot of tennis tournaments, but that you might be among the older women on tour. Does winning a match like this, and you have had a lot of great matches recently kind of, do you feel like your victory is inspiring at all for other women that want to play longer? Not that you're old. But you know what I mean.**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Yes, no, definitely. I mean, I always -- because I started very young, by 17 I was top 100, and with 18 I finished the year I think 30-something. So I definitely started very well. If you'd have asked me back then, I mean, I would say by 30 I wouldn't probably be playing anymore.

But then of course I think with the years you start to mature, you start to enjoy the game a bit more, so right now I'm really enjoying tennis probably in a way that when I was 20 I didn't really enjoy it.

So of course I wish I was 20 and have these results, but in the same time I'm very proud of my mindset, I'm very proud of my work ethic, I'm very proud of my discipline, and also my belief, because I always believed that my game can do damage. I always believed that with this game I can do great things.

You know, like some players take longer, some players take less time, but I'm still proud of everything I have achieved throughout my career.

**Q. I saw in Wikipedia, and I don't know if this is true, that your dad owns or owned an ice cream factory. Is that right?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Yes.

**Q. Still does?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Yes.

**Q. Do you like ice cream a lot? What's your favorite flavor?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Yes, that's my favorite of course dessert. I grew up with ice cream summer, winter. We always had at home, my mom and dad, they have a little

factory, ice cream factory. So they are hard-working people, and of course as a kid I enjoyed their business a lot.

**Q. What's your favorite flavor?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: I would say vanilla-coconut-pistachio. That's the trio for me.

**Q. Just with your success at Indian Wells and then now here, does this week emotionally, with this result, feel different than last week? In other words, maybe last week felt like more of a big deal and maybe now it feels like business?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Yes, yes. You're right. You know, like in Indian Wells it was great to have those couple of wins, you know, and then I lost in quarterfinals to Iga.

I really felt also in quarterfinal that I could have played much better. So coming into here, like I had the confidence, I had the work that I put in in the past couple of months, and like you said, you know, now this week, okay, less emotional, back to work.

With the confidence, I think things become a bit more automatic on the court, which is always very, very nice, because the more confident you are, the less thinking happens in your head. So that's nice.

Definitely I would say this week I kind of calm down a little bit, and it's okay every match, no matter what, just have to prepare really well and (indiscernible) the job.

**Q. Speaking of which, can you just look ahead to facing either Petra or Ekaterina?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: Yes, two different opponents from -- which point of view? Petra, I know really well. We are the same age. We have been playing a lot against each other throughout our careers. I know her. She knows me really well. We have always had great matches. Again, very aggressive player. Big weapons. Yeah, always enjoyed the matches against her.

On the other side, Alexandrova, I never played her. Also, I don't think I ever practiced with her. So I don't know too much about that. I think here my coach has to come in and do a bit of scouting, let's say.

But whoever is gonna win this, it means they are playing well. I mean, they are in semifinals, and these are long events. So to be here, you have to win a couple of matches. I will be ready like I was today.

**Q. How do you feel physically? Why I'm asking, what did you do after the match? It took I think over an hour and a half for you to come in. Was there any issues? What was the process you were following after the match?**

SORANA CIRSTEIA: No, it was just routines. I feel quite good physically. Again, I think physically I am better than I have been ten years ago. I feel very fit. I feel I'm moving better.

But I just went back and just had a bit more media straight after the match than usual. Then of course I went on the bike, had a chat with the coach, then stretching, went in to the physio, had an ice bath. Just the usual routine that I do after every single match.

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