

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/J. Pegula

7-5, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, congratulations. Your first Miami title, second title of the year. Can you give us your thoughts on your performance these past two weeks?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, of course I'm super happy to have this trophy. Finally I was able to play my best tennis in the final, and I'm just super happy with the result and with the performance, I'd say, these months. So super happy to hold this beautiful trophy.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Congratulations on a tremendous victory and winning the Miami Open. You have to be extremely excited about the victory. When we spoke to Jessica, she said that she embraces the challenge of playing you. Kind of tired of losing to you.

ARYNA SABALENKA: I know how it feels (smiling).

Q. I'm just curious about what some of the keys are when you play her and the keys for winning today.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Honestly, it's always challenging playing her. She's such a great player. It's never easy matches against her. I think every time we play against each other, it's all about those few key points in each set.

So it's not like I'm winning it easily. It's always a challenge playing her.

But I know it's tough to lose against one player all the time. I had this issue with Iga, so I know how it feels. But I think we all push each other to the next level, and we all improve from these tough lessons.

So I'm excited facing her again, hopefully another final, and, I mean, of course I'm going to try my best to keep winning (smiling). I always enjoy our battles against each other.

Q. I remember obviously seeing you one time at a Heat game. Obviously you have the best of life off the tennis court. But you mean business. My question to you is: Being the Miami trophy now, does that stand out in any way, winning "the" Miami trophy here in Miami?

ARYNA SABALENKA: What was the question, if that what?

Q. Winning the Miami Open trophy in Miami, does that stand out in any way from your other trophies to you?

ARYNA SABALENKA: No, that definitely very special trophy. I feel like home here. I mean, I kind of like, I cannot say we live here because we are traveling every week, but I have a place here, so it feels like home.

I felt all the support throughout this week. This trophy is a very special trophy. If I would lose today, it would be so tough to come back home and stay there, because I have been say saying throughout the tournament and everything would remind me about Miami Open, so I'm super happy to come back home as the champion of the tournament.

I'll just have a good vibes only for the next couple of weeks of preparation for the clay courts. It's super special.

Q. Two-part question. If you came into this match today and know you were going to lose your serve three times in the first set, do you think you still would have won the first set? The second part is take me through the 5-6 game, first set, you showed all of your variety.

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, honestly going into this match, I had the mentality that no matter what happens, if she's gonna break me, I had the mentality to stay there, to focus on myself, to fight for every point no matter what.

I didn't want to lose another final, to be honest. It's really tough to lose in the final. So if someone would say that, I'd be, like, okay, it's going to be a battle, I'm ready for that.

Yeah, that game, what was that honestly, it was just



another level. I'm super happy that I was able to put everything together and to bring the variety in that game. It was very important game.

Yeah, that was just, wow, like I was impressed by myself, honestly. I was, like, I'm so sorry, I don't know how I made that shot, but it was amazing.

Q. Did you say you're going to spend the next two weeks here in Miami?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah.

Q. Tonight, any big plans, going back home?

ARYNA SABALENKA: I don't know. I thought my team will be so excited. But then I saw them, probably they're so excited, they spent a lot of emotions in the final. Today we're going to chill, but tomorrow I'm going to force them, yeah, to do something, to have drinks, to have -- I don't know, maybe some burgers, pizza, just to have fun.

I think we should celebrate, because we struggled after those tough finals. We all were kind of, like, depressed. I think after this final, we have to celebrate a little bit just to remember the moment, you know.

Tequila, yes, of course. I didn't say that. It was just obvious in my head. Yeah, it's going to be tequila. I'm getting older. Before I would celebrate with some sugar stuff. Nowadays it's alcohol. I hope I'm not going to become alcoholic, but yeah. (Laughter.)

But if I will, it means that I had a lot of trophies to celebrate. So I can sacrifice that (smiling).

Q. It was interesting what you were saying on The Tennis Channel interview about not getting angry at yourself when you lose your serve. Obviously you would have been angry a lot in that first set with the way it went, that crazy game. But how much did you work on that, on keeping the control? You used to be very visible when you got angry with yourself, and now you keep yourself under control much more. Was that a conscious decision to really work on that?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, honestly, I struggled a lot in the past with a lot of different things, so I went through really different challenges, and I was struggling with my serve so much, I couldn't serve for a while, so I had to play without the serve.

And I think that was the moment when I realized that I actually have other weapons in my game and strengths, and I can actually win the match even if my serve is not

working.

Then one day, yeah, I just decided, okay, whatever happens on the court, I'm not going to show my emotions. I went through a lot, and there is much more difficult stuff in life than just tennis match, so I was, like, okay, whatever happens, I'm not going to show any emotions. I'm done with that. I'm not going to be that kid who's, like, getting frustrated and losing the matches.

So it worked really well, and I think it was just, like, the first year when I won Australian Open. I just realized a lot of things, and since then I'm a different person, a different player. Like, mental part of the game, it was a huge improvement.

Q. Following on what he just said, when we see you on the court when you're playing, when you lose a point, sometimes you talk to yourself and we visibly see you talking. How are you talking to yourself? Are you reprimanding you or encouraging yourself, or what are you telling yourself?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Honestly, I don't remember. But sometimes I would just be, Come on, why would you do that? You knew it wouldn't work. You knew the plan.

I would just, like, telling myself, Be disciplined, like, just keep pushing.

Sometimes when I'm losing, like, several points in the row, I'm just reminding myself, like, Come on, you can fight through it, you can win this match, win the point.

I'm just reminding myself how tough I am and strong I am and that I can go through it. I'm just kind of, like, I don't know, like, helping myself and not really charging myself too much anymore on the court.

Probably sometimes talking to myself about the tactic and stuff, like, Why would I do that?

I don't know. Honestly, I don't remember what I would tell myself. Sometimes I would be, Why would you do that? Something like that. Then I'm, like, Okay, next one.

Q. Aryna, 19 career titles, 8 1000s. Do you have some sort of a diary or a book or notepad that when you win a title it's, check, especially the first time you win a particular one? Is there anything like that that you have?

ARYNA SABALENKA: No, it's all in my head and my memory and my heart. The only thing I have right now is just I'm doing this Fujifilm pictures. So I put it in the album.

Sometimes I go through the album.

I just started this year, so not much there, but I go through and, you know, like, seeing the picture, it just brings me back to the good memories. It just help me to stay positive and be appreciative to what I have in life.

But no book or something like that. I do have, I have to say, nobody knows about that, but I do have, sometimes when I'm really pissed or really struggling with something, I write down the plan. Like, for example, I want to achieve something, and there's like what should do I to achieve that?

But I do that and I forget about that. I'm just, like, leave my thoughts there, and then I see it, and then it's kind of, like, structured, the plan in my head, and I just, yeah, and I just go with it.

Q. I wanted to ask you with the clay court season coming up. Obviously you have made some deep runs in the big clay court events. Won Madrid twice. What do you feel is the biggest key in your game to make that breakthrough finally at Rome and Roland Garros?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I think physically I'm ready to go. Physically I'm strong, and I'm not rushing the point and I know I can stay in the point for how long I need.

I think that's the key, because I think I have got everything to be a good player on the clay court. So I think that we're gonna focus on -- I don't know actually. I haven't talked to my team. But I can assume we're going to focus on my fitness and, yeah, probably on my fitness.

I don't know. I hope so (smiling).

Q. Can you explain or tell about your relationship with the Brazilian crowd during these two weeks?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, that was something special and amazing. I'm super happy to have my Brazilian fans on my side, because, like, whenever there is Brazilians in the house, you will hear their support. They are loud and they are crazy, in a good way, and I feel all the support, and it just helps me to keep going and keep fighting just to feel the atmosphere one more time.

Q. You have plans to visit Brazil or Argentina?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Of course. My boyfriend he's keep pushing me to go there, but it's just tough to schedule, but I really want to. Before I met my boyfriend, I really wanted to go to Rio.

I saw all of the beautiful pictures. I know about the crazy part of the city, of the country, but I really want to visit Rio, Sao Paulo, all of the beautiful places. I really want to, and I hope we're going to schedule it this year.

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