

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

## Victoria Azarenka

### Press Conference



V. AZARENKA/D. Cibulkova

6-2, 3-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Domi is such a familiar opponent to you. Was that any kind of comfort to play someone that you knew so well in a venue that is so new that you've never been to before?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I mean, I don't know about comfort level, because I knew she's a big fighter. Even though we know each other pretty well, I feel that we haven't played in a few years. I feel the last time was actually in Miami but five years ago or so.

She's a very dangerous opponent, because no matter how many, she comes off confident or not confident against top players, she's always bringing a little bit of a next level and good game. She's a big fighter. So I knew it's not going to be easy, for sure.

**Q. What did you make of the conditions out there? I think Petra in her interview earlier said it's like a stadium within a stadium. Curious what your thoughts are on it.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I think the stadium is beautiful. I think the logistics here work out pretty well. I feel the expansion of the tournament was, first of all, really necessary. I think they have done a great job with organizing and, you know, looks like incredible fan experience, as well, here for players. There is a lot more room. There is a lot better facilities. So I'm pretty happy.

I think maybe further down, the tournament, it would be wiser to start the matches at 1:00 because of the shade, you know, right, starts to move right across, which is -- you know, it's for both players, but I feel like probably for TV and for players would be more comforting, because at 1:00 already there is no shade and we can play without any things like that.

**Q. You've played so many close matches this year. What do you think helped you get over the finish line today?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I think, you know, the kind of losses that I had in the beginning of the year is something that I'm trying to build from, because that's where you kind of learn most. I had a pretty close

match, last one in Acapulco, which I was also serving for the match and I didn't convert that opportunity.

So today it was a different story, and I'm happy with that progress, because, you know, as much as you want to be on the roll and winning easy matches, it never happens this way.

**Q. You did stay in Acapulco and won the doubles title. Did that help you at all?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, right now the match experience, the playing, for me, it's all good practice, because I'm trying to build the confidence, trying to build the momentum, singles or doubles. It helps both, because there is no other practice like match practice.

So I'm happy to be playing doubles right now. Always been pretty good in doubles and in mixed, and it's fun. I'm trying to get extra practice with playing that.

**Q. Did you put any thought to being the first player to win an official match on this stadium? It's a big deal in Miami to have everything here in Hard Rock Stadium. I was wondering if before the match you were thinking about it, just kind of being the first player to win here.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, you know, they asked me the same question on the court, and it's a huge honor for me to be able to be the first player to cut the ribbon, let's say, let's say it that way.

I knew I would be playing the first match last week. You know, the tournament asked me if I would be happy, and I was really happy that they asked me to play. It's incredible stadium. As I said, the facilities are amazing, and I hope this tournament is only going to grow. Yeah, I was really honored to play.

**Q. You might have Caroline Garcia next. What makes her tough as an opponent?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, we played, I think it was the first match, only match we played last year in Cincinnati, actually quite a close match. I had a lot of opportunities in that match.

She's a very talented player. She has a lot of skills, has a lot of speed on the ball. She has kind of a fast-like arm with her forehand. A lot of power and spin. She can serve really well. She's a dangerous player,

definitely.

It will actually be interesting for me to play against her, looking backward from the last year.

**Q. It might not have been the start that you wanted in 2019, but it seems like you're getting on in a rhythm. Do you feel that way?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I feel like I'm taking small steps forward. It's about building. It's easy to get frustrated in the process, but sometimes it takes one little step to kind of go up the slide, you know.

We have seen that in last couple of years with some young players, you know, who haven't been showing some results, and then all of a sudden, boom, there is that momentum.

I'm looking for that momentum, but I'm trying to build that mountain with one stone at a time to be able, when I go up, to stay there, not just flash results, yeah.

**Q. Thank you not only for being the first match but making it a very compelling one. I know everyone is talking about the Canadian winning in Indian Wells, but the next thing they are talking about is they say one of the most exciting matches ever seen as an opening day was your match against Serena Williams in Indian Wells because of all the fight you had and the minimum of unforced errors. Even though you lost that match, did that help you focus? Did you feel it helped you get your goals and you feel you really, really belong on the tour as one of the top elite players?**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I thought that was really my first best match since really kind of like my comeback on the tour. That definitely gave me a little bit of more confidence, of seeing my abilities in the match, because I know I have -- I'm not doubting my abilities as a player. It's just being able to transfer that from practice to the match has been a struggle, and in that match, I was able to do this.

I came up short a little bit, but it was, again, a really good step forward for me. As I said, the process can be frustrating and the patience is not easy to have, but I'm definitely improving step by step, and I want to continue to go that way.

**Q. I have a little bit of an entertainment question or silly question, depending on your point of view. There has been a national TV commercial promoting glasses, and there is an owl watching a tennis match. In the commercial, the owl says, "Who, who," and oddly enough, when you listen close enough, it sounds like you playing tennis. Is that one of your endorsement deals? Maybe they**

**should have you with the owl. It would be a lot of fun. It sounded a lot like you.**

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I'm going to check if they sampled me, and I'm going to ask for my royalties then (smiling).

Thank you for letting me know that.