

Miami Open presented by Itaú

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

Simona Halep

Press Conference



S. HALEP/Q. Wang

6-4, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. 5-1, was that Fighter Girl coming out for you? How do you diagnose the last couple of games?

SIMONA HALEP: Well, yeah, that second set until 5-1 down was not great. I started to be a little bit negative and talking around the court.

But I was able to stop that. What was much better then, I focused on the game. I think I did it pretty well.

Q. So you're going to the semifinals. Which makes you more nervous: semifinals with Vondrousova or with Pliskova?

SIMONA HALEP: Both of them (smiling). It's going to be a tough match and a big challenge.

Q. You played her last year in Indian Wells, and you won that match. I'm not sure if you still remember that match, but in the past years, she increase her ranking a lot. Right now she's a top-20 player. Can you please compare today's match to last year's match and any change from her or any improvement?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, she's more solid. She doesn't miss that much. She's hitting strong, also the serve. I think she's a better player than last year, and she can improve a lot also.

Q. When you're in the middle of a run like that and you're playing really well and running around and the points are going along and you're hanging in there, describe that for us. Are you feeling joy? Are you feeling anger? Are you feeling -- what is it?

SIMONA HALEP: During the match? Whole match or just when...

Q. When you're on a run like that, during that great run of 22 points out of 31 or something.

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, I feel joy. I feel happiness, because I start to feel the ball. And when I feel I play well, makes me more relaxed. I enjoy more the time on court.

Gives me confidence that I'm able to do also very beautiful points, which I did today with the backhand. So I think I increase my level of confidence a lot when I have points like this. Yeah, I start to feel happy on court, which is the most important thing for me.

Q. Do you feel that the days when you've struggled with negativity more and you would lose a match, are they over now, do you feel like? Do you feel like you've gotten over that in the long term?

SIMONA HALEP: I am much better, way much better than before. In the last two years I think I didn't have many matches that I lost because of the negativity.

Today I had those games, five games that I was negative, but I was able to turn it around just to switch off and to try to be positive.

It worked. All the matches I lost in the last period were because I didn't play well enough, so the mental part is pretty good now. I feel it like that.

Q. How much have you allowed the potential to return to No. 1 enter into your mindset at all by winning the semi?

SIMONA HALEP: I just found out from my coach that I need one more match to be No. 1 again. I think it's pretty much in my head, and I'm happy that I'm in this position again. Gives me confidence, because staying two months in the offseason, I didn't believe I would be so close again so fast.

So it's going to be a big challenge, but I like to play with the pressure. So I hope tomorrow I play my best.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

SIMONA HALEP: It would be mean a lot, because I show myself that I'm strong enough, and I worked very hard until I started to play for this year. I think I did a pretty good job.

Q. The men's tour is in transition looking for a new leader at the top. Do you think that the women's tour should be run by a woman, or is it okay the way it is, being run by a man?

SIMONA HALEP: Tough question.

Q. I know. I'm sorry.

SIMONA HALEP: Can I say that it's fine how it is?

Q. Sure.

SIMONA HALEP: Okay. It is fine how it is now.

Q. And you think it's okay for, in general, sports -- so many opportunities for women in sports, and would you like to see more women leading those sports teams?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, I would like to see more women, because I feel that the women have enough power to lead everything and we are strong enough for big things.

Q. It's been a while since you have been in the semis here. What do you think of this new venue, first of all?

SIMONA HALEP: I think it's a great thing. The players have much better conditions, because everything, it's bigger: locker room, restaurant, player restaurant. I think it's a good change for everybody, and I'm sure they are going to improve a lot, so they are looking for this. They did a great job for the first year.

Q. And you talked about your next match coming up, about either one of those women would get you nervous. Can you talk about each one a little bit? I know one of them you recently lost to, right?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, it's going to be good. If I play against her, maybe I can take the revenge.

I learned many things from last week's match. I didn't play well enough to beat her. She's a very good player. If I play against her, I will have a chance to be better.

And against Pliskova is always tough. We played many matches, but every match is difficult. I will just be ready for my semifinals.

Q. Firstly, on the No. 1 aspect, you're saying, yes, it means a lot, but is it the be-all-and-end-all to be back at No. 1? How important is that to you? Because so many players have said in the past that it's a case of "been there, done that." It's nice to be there, but it's not a crucial thing.

SIMONA HALEP: Doesn't mean everything to get back to No. 1 in this moment, tomorrow or next week. For me, more important is to finish the year if I will be able to do that again.

But anyway, every day that, every single day that you're No. 1 is a special day. So I will take that. And if I can do it tomorrow, I will be very proud.

Q. The other part, going back to the point of negativity, and you said it's been a couple of years, how much of that has had to do with Darren trying to get you out of that negativity? And what would

he say to you after a match to start you thinking more positively and not negatively?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, definitely he helped me 100% on this thing. He's very positive and very relaxed about everything. I just tried to learn how to be positive, because I used to be negative all the time. So I think it's in my nature.

After a tough match that I lost because of my negative mind, he told me that I just make myself suffer alone, and that's why I'm not able to win matches because my tennis is great. At one point, actually in this city, it was a tough moment. I really want to thank him again for that moment, turn everything in my head, switched the button, and that's why I was able to win a Grand Slam and to be No. 1. So thanks to him.

Q. On the No. 1 ranking again, you have played a lot of matches...

SIMONA HALEP: We talk again about this, please, nonstop.

Q. I'm sorry. Do you think it is a positive to go into this match and go into this tournament, even, with kind of a concrete goal, you know, coming out of this -- because maybe in the other tournaments you're playing to get your tennis better and to win the tournament, but to have something very concrete, one match, one win, I get that at least?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, when I came here, I didn't think at all about this chance to be No. 1. It was very far, and I didn't want to think about it.

But now that I'm one match away, I would take it, and I would take the talking about it, because it gives me a little bit of pressure. But as I said, I play well with pressure, and I think it's a big challenge. So is nothing negative in this way. I'm one match away to be No. 1 again, so is just a great thing. It's nothing bad in that, so it's nice.

Q. What advice will you give to the young guys that are starting to play to change the mindset that you did two years ago from negative to positive?

SIMONA HALEP: Well, it was really, really tough for me to learn that. So it's tough also to give an advice on that.

Just that you put yourself down too much if you're negative, and it's better to let the opponent to beat you than to beat yourself on court because you're negative.

So I think they have to start already to think about the positive things on court, and if they are negative, they should start working with someone to put them on the right way, because it's very important in these days.