

# BNP Paribas Open

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

## Simona Halep

Press Conference

S. HALEP/B. Strycova

6-3, 1-0 (ret.)

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Short day for you, I guess, today. Overall how happy are you you're into the quarters where you are defending champion?**

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, it was short and I feel sorry for her because she's sick. It's not easy to be sick and to keep continue playing the match.

So I understand her. I'm happy that I am again in the quarterfinals. I feel good here. You know, I started to feel my game. I started to feel very well on court. I move well. It's the most important thing.

Of course the matches, it's important to win a match, but it's better to feel that you are like strong on court and then to think about winning a match.

**Q. Have you been able to take what you have been working on in practice and see it immediately on the match court?**

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, I did. Two first matches were much better than this one. This one I didn't feel very well the ball. Wasn't my best tennis.

But still it's important when you can win even if you don't play your best.

Yeah, I'm working hard every day. I will keep working and the confidence is going up again and I feel strong mentally now. I feel that I have chance every time when I go on court.

So I feel good. I feel relaxed, and I'm looking forward for the next match.

**Q. How difficult was it like in Australia and maybe in the Middle East to take the court and play knowing that you weren't 100%?**

SIMONA HALEP: It was very tough. Actually started in December. I had infection with my stomach first, so was very tough to practice. I couldn't practice.

I was getting tired after 10, 15 minutes. So that was a bit scary for me.



And then, before Fed Cup I started to feel better. I played two good matches there. And then in Dubai/Doha, even if I lost the matches, I was feeling better.

So it was okay. Then I came here fully prepared to start working again hard. I had the chance to meet two special people, and everything is going well now. I'm happy for that.

**Q. Do you think it's fair to give Steffi and Andre a lot of credit?**

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah.

**Q. You meet them and you start playing better? You think it's not a coincidence?**

SIMONA HALEP: It's not like a magic thing. (Smiling.) But mentally was helping me a lot because I changed a little bit my mentality, how to see the things now when I'm going to defend a title.

So I just came here relaxed and trying to play my best, trying to be back on court fighting and believing that I can win matches.

**Q. So next you probably will play Serena. She has a big lead right now. You have played good matches against her. What are you expecting from this match?**

SIMONA HALEP: I expect a tough one, of course. She's very strong. I know her pretty well. We played each other many times.

I know that it's gonna be tough to win, but still, I have my chance. I believe that I have my chance, and I just have to go to play my best, to try everything to win.

First I have to believe that I can win. So then if my game is going well it's gonna be a good match. I'm waiting for it, and I'm ready to play.

**Q. And you believe you can win?**

SIMONA HALEP: I believe now, yeah.

**Q. What do you think is the most important part of your game that you'll need to have going for you tomorrow in order to compete with her?**

SIMONA HALEP: I think I have to do my game like I did

every day since I came in the U.S.: aggressive, not very strong. I don't hit very strong. I just take the ball fast. I move well. I hit with confidence. Also, the serve is going well.

So I feel okay. I feel that I have the game to play against her. We will see tomorrow. It's tough. I repeat that, because it's normal to be tough. She's No. 1 in the world.

Yeah, it's good experience for me to play against her and also big challenge.

**Q. What is it about your game? Outside of Azarenka, you're probably the one that pushes Serena the most in terms of being able to take her to three sets and beat her.**

SIMONA HALEP: I didn't think about this. My matches against her, yeah, were pretty tough. I was close in some matches.

But still, I didn't win. So it's tough to --

**Q. You won one.**

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, once. (Smiling.)

I just want to take it like normal, a normal match, nothing special, and just go on court and play, trying my best.

**Q. Have you changed anything the way that you play her each time that you have done, each time that you have faced her?**

SIMONA HALEP: Against her?

**Q. Do you make any changes based on what you learn every time a little bit?**

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, I said I learn every time I play here because every time I believe more that I can beat her, I can win against her.

But, no, I don't change anything about my game. I just go on court and trying to play the best that I know my game. So it's impossible to change something in your game just for one player. You have to go there and to do your normal job.

**Q. Does she change anything against you?**

SIMONA HALEP: I don't know. You will ask her after when she's coming.

I don't know. She's playing very strong always, so...

**Q. Do you have a favorite athlete? Not just tennis. It can be tennis. Just your favorite athlete.**

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, I have. She was practicing long time ago, but the perfect 10, Nadia, can be the

example for everyone from Romania.

**Q. And you obviously know her.**

SIMONA HALEP: (Shrugging.)

**Q. Yeah, it's different. When you met Steffi, because you met Justine last year in Canada --**

SIMONA HALEP: Toronto, yeah.

**Q. -- and you were surprised that she was maybe a little bit smaller than you, whatever. When you met Steffi, was she different than what you thought?**

SIMONA HALEP: No. She's the same. She's very skinny and, yeah, she looks great.

**Q. What about her personality? Did she surprise you?**

SIMONA HALEP: No, because I knew that she's -- she has a strong personality, and when she speaks, speaks with confidence.

So, yeah, I didn't -- it wasn't -- I wasn't surprised about how she is. I like her a lot, how she speaks, how she see the things about tennis.

**Q. You mentioned her backhand slice being amazing.**

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, I saw her.

**Q. How does it compare with Roberta Vinci's?**

SIMONA HALEP: I think it's stronger a little bit. Vinci's is more slice, more cut when she hit it. Steffi's is more flat. Yeah, I think. I'm not a good specialist in slice, but, yeah, just my opinion.

**Q. So it stays low or it stops?**

SIMONA HALEP: No, stays low and coming to you.

**Q. When it comes at you?**

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah.