

BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, March 20, 2016

Serena Williams

Press Conference



V. AZARENKA/S. Williams

6-4, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What do you think went wrong? What are you not satisfied with today, apart from the result?

SERENA WILLIAMS: You know, I think overall it was a good result for me just to be able to be back and to be able to play, in general.

Yeah, I think that overall was just really, really good. Obviously I didn't win and that's not the result I was looking for, but I think looking at the big picture it's just I definitely didn't expect to be on that stage again.

Yeah, so it was interesting. It's an interesting feeling right now.

Q. You just shared a beautiful moment on the court with CEO Raymond Moore, and he said earlier today, quote, if I was a lady player, I would go down every night on my knees and thank God that Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal were born. They have carried the sport. What's your reaction to that comment and the controversy it's created?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Well, I don't understand why I always have to answer questions about controversy like this (laughter.) Obviously I don't think any woman should be down on their knees thanking anybody like that.

I think Venus, myself, a number of players have been -- if I could tell you every day how many people say they don't watch tennis unless they're watching myself or my sister, I couldn't even bring up that number. So I don't think that is a very accurate statement.

I think there is a lot of women out there who are more -- are very exciting to watch. I think there are a lot of men out there who are exciting to watch. I think it definitely goes both ways. I think those remarks are very much mistaken and very, very, very inaccurate.

Q. Do you feel like there is maybe a misunderstanding behind how people are interpreting that in some way?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Well, if you read the transcript

you can only interpret it one way. I speak very good English. I'm sure he does, too.

You know, there's only one way to interpret that. Get on your knees, which is offensive enough, and thank a man, which is not -- we, as women, have come a long way. We shouldn't have to drop to our knees at any point.

Q. You said the other day, like you said, you didn't think you'd ever be in a final here today. It was a slow start, which isn't strange for you, but how much did the nerves sort of play a part today?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I was definitely a little nervous. I did not expect to be, at all, like zero, and then when I walked out there I was like, Oh, man, I'm really nervous.

Yeah, and really excited. Those emotions I had a little bit last year I was having again. Definitely did not expect that. But with that being said, you know, you can't be nervous the whole match.

Q. Can you talk about what happened there at 5-2? Seemed like a switch got flipped for you and you started really strong coming back?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I don't know. I don't think I ever played the way I could play in that whole match, but 5-2, I don't know, I mean, it could have been 5-All, but it just didn't work out for me.

Q. Do you feel like the momentum was in your favor, that you were going to be able to turn it around at that point?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, I felt like the momentum was in my favor, but that's one thing that Victoria is great at, fighting and never letting anything go too much of her opponent's way, really taking control.

I think that's one thing she's really, really unbelievable at. So she was able to do that again.

Q. You have led women, and Venus also, have led women through a lot of struggles. Are you surprised in 2016 that's issues and complaints and sexism are still cropping up?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, I'm still surprised, especially with me and Venus and all the other women on the tour that's done well. Last year the women's

final at the US Open sold out well before the men. I'm sorry, did Roger play in that final or Rafa or any man play in that final that was sold out before the men's final? I think not.

So I just feel like in order to make a comment you have to have history and you have to have facts and you have to know things. You have to know of everything. I mean, you look at someone like Billie Jean King who opened so many doors for not only women's players but women's athletes in general.

So I feel like, you know, that is such a disservice to her and every female, not only a female athlete but every woman on this planet, that has ever tried to stand up for what they believed in and being proud to be a woman.

Q. What was your reaction when you saw it? You said you saw the transcript.

SERENA WILLIAMS: "Really?"

Q. How did it come to your attention?

SERENA WILLIAMS: (Laughter.)

Actually, I love that quote.

How did it come to my attention? Well, unfortunately, you know, sometimes we -- if someone makes irrational comments or if something unfortunate goes on in the sport, you know, everyone hears about it. I'm on social media enough to hear about it.

So, yeah.

Q. Did you feel like today in the match -- at some points it seemed like you were aggressive, trying to hit a really big ball a lot. Were you trying to hit through nerves or was that the game plan going out there?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Definitely not the game plan. I think I probably was trying to hit through nerves. I was talking to Patrick and he said he's never seen me play that flat. I was like, Really? (Laughter.) Again.

He said, Yeah, I guess so. So I think it was a little bit of nerves and just trying to hit out. Just unexpected nerves maybe.

Q. You were emotional at the end. What did you think about the crowd's reaction overall at this tournament and also Vika's thank you to you?

SERENA WILLIAMS: Yeah, Vika is a really sweet girl. We really get along really, really, really well. It meant a lot to me. I got emotional when she was talking.

You know, and the crowd, as well, was really --you

know, obviously the last time I was there was probably the worst moment of my whole career. Not probably. Sure.

To be back out there, which I never thought I would be, you know, was really different and special. You know, it was just -- I was overwhelmed with, I think, emotions and nerves. Obviously I think everything kind of played a part.

But for me it wasn't about winning. It was just about, as Raymond said, coming back out here and doing well. No shade.

Q. When was the last time you can remember that you felt as emotional on court at a presentation ceremony as you were today?

SERENA WILLIAMS: I don't think I have ever felt like that, really, to be -- yeah, I don't think so.