

BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 11, 2017

Simona Halep

Press Conference



S. HALEP/D. Vekic

6-4, 6-1

An interview with:

SIMONA HALEP

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. First match back. So how do you rate it?

SIMONA HALEP: Actually, I think it was a very good match today. I didn't expect that, to be honest, because it's tough to come back after four, five weeks without playing at all.

So, yeah, I tried just to stay positive, to not expecting anything. Just going there and try to feel the game. So I did it pretty well, and I'm really proud of myself.

Q. Where did you feel like that five weeks of rust on the court -- where did you feel it the most?

SIMONA HALEP: A little bit timing. I lost a little bit the timing. I don't feel 100% the distance between me and the ball.

But it's normal. I have just to practice more, because I didn't have the chance also to practice. It will be okay. Just, I need time and to be patient.

Q. Does it ever feel like -- I mean, obviously I will see you practice and you're hitting the ball well on the practice court. So when you get to the match court, why is it that, you know, you can't get the distance right or you feel like the timing is off?

SIMONA HALEP: It's official match. It's different. Everyone in the practice place, like, crazy. But when the pressure comes, when the points are coming, so it's much different.

Just it's turning something in the head (smiling). I don't know why. I don't know how. But it's true. So it's different and makes a little bit the life more difficult.

Q. Next one, KiKi Mladenovic, playing very, very well to start the season. How do you go into this match?

SIMONA HALEP: I'm here, and she's here.

Q. You think so?

SIMONA HALEP: No. Just maybe the confidence. Because she had many victories. She won a title. But today helped me a lot this match, and I'm pretty sure that I'm ready to face her.

She's playing very well, but I'm coming back. I have no pressure. No expectations. And when I don't have expectation, I play better.

So I just can't wait to go there to play. I'm really happy I'm healthy, so doesn't matter anything else.

Q. Does it feel fun now?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah. I'm more relaxed now. You can see. I'm more relaxed and many things are changed for me, today as well.

Q. I noticed when you were down 2-1 in the first set, it looked like you had her running left and right, left and right, left and right. It looked like Donna gave everything in those first couple of games. Do you think that she ran out of gas as the match progressed?

SIMONA HALEP: Maybe she had, like, a plan to hit very strongly the ball, to make me run. Because like everyone knows, I didn't practice for a long time.

Maybe, yeah. I didn't feel that she was out of the gas. I just felt that she starting to miss a little bit and to lose the confidence, and then I started to dominate the game, to push her back. So she couldn't be, like, comfortable there to hit the ball anymore.

Q. Was it your strategy to start kind of slow and then start hitting harder and harder --

SIMONA HALEP: No.

Q. -- as the match progressed?

SIMONA HALEP: No. I wanted to hit from the beginning but didn't work too well, because it was the first match.

Q. Last year, you know, you had the illness during the offseason and you had a slow start to the season. How do you compare that, how you felt at Indian Wells last year at this time, compared to this year when you kind of have a similar situation where maybe you can't practice as much, and...

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, actually last year was different because I had, like, health problem. I was sick and I had infection and it was really tough.

Now I had only an injury. So if I fix this, everything, it's okay. I'm not that scared. I can say last year I was a little bit scared because of my nose. I had also scheduled an operation, so it was not easy to come here to play, but still I played a good tournament. I made quarterfinals, I think.

So hopefully this year I can repeat the result. That is not easy. But I'm here just to try to give everything I have.

Q. But do you feel like you have the same confidence level or game level this year as you did last year?

SIMONA HALEP: I'm totally different person. Today also happen something sad in my family, and I see the life different just in 10 hours. So everything is changed in my head.

Q. Can you share what that was?

SIMONA HALEP: I posted on Facebook, but my grandpa died today, and, yeah, I was close to him. It's tough, but, you know, life -- I'm happy that I could win, actually. It's a positive thing for me.

Q. Was it sudden or did you know he was sick or...

SIMONA HALEP: He was sick for one month. Yeah. But, yeah, he was old. 82. Hopefully we can live that much.

Q. Full life?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah.

Q. Quite a few Romanian flags in the stands.

SIMONA HALEP: Many.

Q. And a lot of cheering going on as well. Does that put extra pressure on you? Does that make you happy? Do you tune that out?

SIMONA HALEP: No pressure anymore. I feel just happy that I have so many supporters. I hear them a lot, and it gives me energy. I just want to take it, like, a good thing. They appreciate me. They come all the time to support me, so I cannot ask for better. It's nice, and I want to thank them for that.