

BNP Paribas Open

Monday, March 13, 2017

Venus Williams

Press Conference

V. WILLIAMS/L. Safarova

6-4, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How bad of the heat and how was your reaction to it?

A. It was warm. That sun is strong. Thankfully, I live in Florida, so I think it prepares you for a lot. So I got pretty comfortable pretty fast.

Q. How were you feeling off the ground today? It seemed like the consistency was there that was maybe not as consistent in the first match.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah. I felt really pretty good off the ground. This court is tricky as the ball stops, so a lot of the times you're not hitting the ball where you think you're going to hit it. So it definitely takes adjustments.

I don't know if there's enough time to adjust, anyway. You just kind of like deal with it. So it's an interesting court. You know, I felt like I was being able to string points together, which of course puts pressure on my opponents if I'm not making as many errors.

Q. It's the first time you have beaten Lucie in many years, and it's been a while since you even played her. How good is to finally score a win over her, and what did you know what to take from those previous matches into today?

A. Yeah, honestly we haven't played in a while, so I even had to look at what happened in the past. It looks like she won the last two.

But what can you do except play the match that's happening today, for me and for her? And, you know, like I said, the surface is tough. I think it was hard for her. The surface probably favored me a little more.

Q. You said you really, really, really wanted to win the tournament. You're from California. Just talk about that and what your motivation is.

VENUS WILLIAMS: It won't be easy. It won't be easy. But I would like to try. What else can I do except try? And it hasn't really been the easiest draw, either. I've played some opponents who know how to play tennis.



And just because your ranking says this, doesn't mean that you do not know how to win a match.

And I've had history against these opponents, so not the easiest draw so it was good to come through that.

Q. And just after you left, I think after you left the court, they started to play Aretha Franklin's song "Respect."

VENUS WILLIAMS: Okay. I missed that.

Q. And the people were saying, Hey, isn't that what it was all about all these years? Talk about that, that they played that song.

VENUS WILLIAMS: I missed it, so they might have to do an encore. I love Aretha Franklin.

Q. I know you're not one to spend too much time looking back, but do you ever think about how the way you saw the game when you first were coming up on the tour?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah. I didn't see anything. I just hit hard. I don't know. In some ways it's almost better because you are free. You just play.

I was without boundaries. But now you think and you are trying to structure a point, structure a game, play the percentages but still be aggressive, and it's a whole other mentality. So it's nice to have that moment, but of course there's more success when you actually know what you're doing.

Q. What about the way that you look at losses? Young players tend to think it's the end of the world sometimes earlier in their careers when their losing.

A. I never thought it was the end the world, but I do hate feeling bad. So of course I'm extremely motivated by losses, but I don't allow it to ruin my life or the life of those round me any longer.

You have to grow up and try to get some perspective and it's not easy. It takes a while. It takes a long time, like, decades. Literally.

Q. Speaking of that perspective, it's such a rare thing to have an athlete be a bona fide, living legend like yourself and your sister and Roger and

Tom Brady and players that are considered some of the best of all time that are still relevant competitors right now. When you walk out to the court, does that add or does it maybe take some of pressure off of you?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I think it takes the pressure off, because I don't think any of the players you mentioned have anything to prove. We're just here because we love it, and we know we have a lot to give, and we have wins in our body that are just aching to get out and that's how I feel.

I can hit the ball, and I can hit it well. If anything, I feel like I'm getting better. So as long as I'm improving, I want to be here. On the day that I'm not improving and this is a realization, then that's when you know you have to walk away. So not there yet.

Q. You said it's great to feel without boundaries. Just talk about that feeling that's hard-earned and it must feel great.

VENUS WILLIAMS: And these are our boundaries, and the boundaries are you don't now how to win, so you don't win the event. Not a lot of players can win events. I think that was like Capriati maybe won her first tournament. Yeah, it's unheard of. So she clearly is a legend.

But there are boundaries. You just can't see them at the moment, the boundary or the success level you're going to have. So I misspoke.

Q. Given your health problems in the past, how are you feeling now? I mean, you certainly seem to -- do you feel good? I mean, is this as good as you have felt in a while, maybe?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Life is good. I can't complain. I can't go to the doctor and say, What is wrong with me? I already know. So I don't want to go to the doctor. I just want to play.

Q. Do you have more pressure planning your next tournament preparation or your sister's wedding?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Oh, my God. Definitely the wedding. I don't know. I mean, she's really taking it easy. She's definitely a great bride. So I'm proud of her for that.

I think it's probably easy to get crazy. Nobody's asked me to marry him before. I avoided it (smiling). But I guess if you find a good one, you've got to figure out how to make it work. So I'm happy that she's found a nice one.

Q. When you were a kid and your dad was feeding you tennis balls, was the joy there from the very beginning?

A. I feel like I'm the most joyful now, honestly. I've clearly loved the game. You have to play this long, to deal with the pressure and to put in the amount of work that it takes.

But I definitely feel like I'm peaking in terms of the love level. I'm enjoying the competition. I like this.

Q. Did it take a while to fall in love with the game in the beginning or was it more like he's training us, we've got a job to do, or did you love being out on the court?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I didn't think at all. So in a way that's a good thing. I just didn't think. I was there, did it. Yeah, so I was oblivious, is the best way to describe it.

Q. I thought I saw Arantxa Sanchez Vicario from across the way. What are your recollections about your first match with her, and have you ever spoken to her about that?

A. We never talked about that match. But she's definitely one of the toughest players to play a youngster because she's just crafty and she knows how to win.

And that's the hardest thing for a young player is like figuring out how to win the matches. So I definitely think that was a great experience for me. And it was definitely a measure of the potential I had in my body. And that was a good thing that I got to play her so early on.

Q. Just talk about, you know, it is a difficult draw and you would potentially get another tough one next with Aga. Very different from the ^ fist ^ first two opponents. So can you just kind of break that down a little bit?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, we've played a lot. Not so often recently, but I'm not sure there will be mystery there for me or her. The mystery is over. We know what to expect. And both of us have to execute our games well to beat the other.

We'll see who I play. I'm not sure. I would like to win again. I'm going to try.

Q. Emma Stone's next movie is going to be as Billie Jean King in The Battle of the Sexes. I just kind of want to get your thoughts about her casting, but also the movie and the timing of the movie, because there's a lot of talk about women and politics and stuff, and now this movie is going to come back and...

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, it's Women's History Month. Yeah. I'm not as familiar with actresses as I should be.

Q. Emma Stone just won Best Actress.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah. I didn't see that. But I'm happy for her (smiling). But I love Billie. So I'm very happy. There should be a movie about her every year. Yeah.

Q. Do you start to feel like you're amongst Billie Jean, Martina, and Chris Evert in terms of the people who are being looked toward as the great women? Not just in tennis but in sports. And that there's a responsibility to sort of impart that wisdom of sort of this Mount Rushmore of women's tennis players that you are now on?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I don't think about it on a daily basis. Every day is a grind. I'm just out there trying to make a difference on the court and in my life and others' lives where I can.

So it's not necessarily a massive conscious effort. I mean, the time of Billie Jean King, it was definitely, okay, women's rights on the world scene, and now it's a little bit more. It's not as, you know, in your face. Recently it's more, so it's a different moment.

So they had an opportunity to do great things and they did. It's just awesome.