

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

Victoria Azarenka

Press Conference



V. AZARENKA/A. Kerber

7-5, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What are you most proud about, beating a quality opponent like Angelique this afternoon?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, definitely finding my rhythm and kind of bringing a lot of, you know, positive energy on the court. When things weren't really working out in the beginning for me, I felt that I was looking for the right approach, trying to find my rhythm, so I think that's what I'm the most proud of today.

Then the game started to pick up. My rhythm started to pick up. My movement started to pick up. I felt like it came first from my approach and my mentality.

Q. This is where you live now, so does it feel like you're playing at home kind of?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I mean, it definitely was the shortest way for me to come to a tournament ever, so that was kind of helpful. Do I feel like playing at home? I still feel like the site, I'm kind of getting used to. I felt that that was more comfortable in the old arena, so this does feel a bit more like a new tournament than Miami Open for me before. But in these circumstances, the smallest amount of travel definitely is helpful and makes it more comfortable.

Q. Obviously you have had great success against her except for one match in 2016. Can you talk about why you think that your game can take her out of her game?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, all matches that we do play still is huge battle. It's never like an easy match, so it's always a really quality match.

I think that our games do match pretty well. She's a counterattacking player. She's great in defense. I do use that part of my game as well sometimes, so it does match to have a lot of like long rallies and tough games.

But I felt that I have always been managing to take my chances in the match, and I know no matter what it's going to be really hard, so I prepare to play against Angelique fully.

Q. Just looking ahead a little bit to Ash. You have spent a lot of time with her on the doubles court when she was having all of her success in 2019 in singles. Wonder what you make of her rise, her improvements, and what will make her a difficult opponent in your next match?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I wouldn't call her being on the rise anymore. I think she established herself pretty well in the spot that she is.

Obviously, you know, the pandemic and the restriction that Australia has, we haven't seen much of Ash, so it's a bit harder to judge where her game is at. Obviously in Australia she produced some incredible tennis.

I mean, she's a very talented player. I always have been a huge fan of her game and the way she plays, the way she, you know, kind of handles herself.

She has a lot of variety. She has pretty much every single shot there is. She's, you know, going to be a great match. I don't know when was the last time we actually played against each other. I think Fed Cup in Australia? That's what I remember.

So it's going to be a great match. I'm really looking forward to playing against her. I miss a lot playing doubles with her, so hopefully we can play a few more tournaments again.

Q. Needless to say, it's an Ash question coming from an Australian. What do you have to do against her? I'm sure it's easy to put good friendships aside when you're on the court, because she was saying how friendly the two of you all were. Yeah, so what do you specifically have to do when you come up against her?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I think at this point it's not that much focus on your opponent as really focus on



yourself. I try to approach my matches more this way.

Obviously you're aware of couple of things that other opponent brings, you know, the game style and everything. As I said, she has a lot of variety. The importance is to take her out of her comfort zone where she moves the ball around anywhere she wants.

But I think it's also a bit too, for me, homework to review a couple of her matches, a couple of the matches that we played together, and to prepare a little bit better.

Q. Some players said the court is slow. How did you feel this?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: If the court is slow?

Q. Slow, yes.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I would agree with this. It has a lot of bounce, but also at some point like the ball also travels kind of fast sometimes. So I think it depends what kind of ball is coming.

Some balls that have maybe a little bit more spin, they are slowing down, but the flat ones also kind of go through. So I think it depends on the game style really.

Q. That first set was such a battle. I got the sense as that went on that whoever won that set was really going to be in the driver's seat. Did you have that feeling as well? That's how it felt out there.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, obviously it's always helpful because after a first set, you know, you're like halfway there and for your opponent it's a longer road, so there is a bit of a mental relief, I will say.

But I also played enough on tour that knowing that one set is not enough and anything can happen. But I did feel more in control of my game because I felt the longer the match was going, the better rhythm I was getting.

So I think from that point of view, that could feel this way.

Q. I wanted to commend you on your recent series of video podcasts. I wanted to find out from you what you felt you learned about yourself from taking on a project like that. Do you hope to do more of them in the future?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yes and yes. I will elaborate more on this. I have learned a lot of that because the reason for me to do the show was for me to learn and for me to take my audience on the learning experience.

The diversity of guests and the panel that we have done, that was the whole kind of point of that. I have learned so much from my guests and also from myself. I have taken myself out of my comfort zone to kind of go in something that I haven't really done before, but I want to do the best as possible.

I didn't want to feel like, you know, I'm just beginning and I'll just see how it goes. I wanted to, you know, prepare myself to do the best job as I can.

So I really took that seriously. It was very scary in the beginning. Unlike tennis, it's very subjective business in part that, you know, people, they like it or they don't like it, when in tennis people can like you or don't like you but you still win or lose. So it's more objective. So that part is always more nerve-racking and gives me a bit more anxiety (smiling).

And, yeah, I am looking forward to do more. One part that was very exciting for me was how people reacted to it and how many more people actually want to do the show and be the guest. So that was like a relief for me (smiling).

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