

Miami Open presented by Itaú

Monday, March 29, 2021

Miami, Florida, USA

Maria Sakkari

Press Conference



M. SAKKARI/J. Pegula

6-4, 2-6, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. A tough three-set win. How happy that you were able to overcome some adversity and get the win today?

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, I think it was one of the toughest matches I have played since the restart last summer. I think Jessica is playing unreal tennis, and as I mentioned on court, she really deserves, you know, the results she has been having. She has been playing really, really well, and she's a very nice girl. That's the most important thing.

So it was a very good win for me, and I think the level was super high from both of us.

Q. Would you say that you and Stefanos have really put Greece back on the map when it comes to tennis in the world?

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, for sure. I think that, you know, tennis is growing in Greece, and as I mentioned a lot of times, tennis now is probably the third-most popular sport in Greece.

Q. How did you find the mental strength to save six match points and then to find it in yourself to pull out the victory on your first match point opportunity?

MARIA SAKKARI: I think once you're in the match, you just don't think that I saved six match points already. It's just that one at a time. I think I came off with some good shots and clever choices and just worked, and it went my way. You know, maybe next time it's going to go the other way. This is, you know, tennis.

I'm sure you have seen a lot of matches, so, you know, sometimes it goes your way; sometimes it doesn't.

Q. How important was it for you to be able to have some Greek fans there in the stands supporting you

and cheering you on?

MARIA SAKKARI: You know, I have said a lot of times already that for me it's super important to see. Even if it's one Greek out there, it makes me happy and it makes me proud.

As I said on court, I love playing for my country, and it's probably the second reason why I play tennis after playing for my family.

Q. It was a very, very tough match. I want to know what was for you the key to get the victory today?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, there wasn't like a tactic, you know. She was playing very, very good from both sides. As I said before, she's one of the toughest players to play now. I think I had to come up with my best tennis. You know, very good decisions and clever decisions on court.

I'm sure you saw that we had long rallies and, you know, very tough points out there. Very physical points. I cannot say that it was, you know, just to attack her forehand or her backhand or something like that. It was just overall to make more balls than her.

Q. What are your goals for this season?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, it's tough to set goals the way the ranking works now. I think, you know, how can I say, I cannot say it in a nice way, the rankings are not so in the real positions of the players that are playing good this year. It's going to take a little bit of time.

Of course WTA is doing, you know, is changing and it's going back with their regular rankings almost. But I cannot set a number for that reason, but I think if I continue playing like this, I'm gonna have some great results and that's all that matters.

Q. In a match like today, I know that you obviously have put in so much work with Tom to get ready for this season, and maybe some bad luck here and there in terms of the results so far, but can you look back at the things that you guys have been working on? What kind of came through maybe today for you that you

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think may have made a difference?

MARIA SAKKARI: I think after the two weeks in Australia, stuck in the room, I lost a little bit of my identity, which is being aggressive but also, you know, making a lot of balls and playing physical matches. Even though I had a couple of good wins after that, I wasn't feeling it.

So after Dubai we spent a lot of time on court, to be honest. We just tried, you know, to get back that and keep my aggressive part and, you know, get back my, how can I say, my boring game. This is how we call it with Tom. It feels now that I'm getting it back. I think these two weeks were very hard for my game, and, you know, I just was not feeling myself.

Q. In finding your boring game or trying to find that game, especially that you started with in Abu Dhabi, which you looked so sharp and primed to do everything, did you guys go back and watch those matches?

MARIA SAKKARI: Yep.

Q. How did you remind yourself how you wanted to play?

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, we had actually another session like a session back home, Tom was like, Look, I know you hate watching yourself playing, but we have to do it.

So we sat down and we watched a few matches from Ostrava, because I think I was playing good tennis back then, as well. Few matches from Abu Dhabi. Just looked at what I was doing differently than the matches that I lost after the Australian quarantine.

Actually, I have been watching every single opponent before playing them, which is something new for me and something that works well.

Q. What does it mean for you to post a result like this, quarterfinals in Miami, first time you have done that, big result to get wins like this. Do you feel like this could be, you know, the jumping-off point or trigger for you to find things again?

MARIA SAKKARI: Maybe, maybe. Why not? I'm going to have a -- I will have very tough match against Naomi next round, but I believe that I have a day off, which is good. I'm gonna practice and sweat it out tomorrow.

I feel like, you know, I'm playing great tennis. Of course she's a very, very tough opponent for me and for everyone. But I believe in myself and, you know, why not, as you

mentioned, do that little jump this week? But no stress (smiling).

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