

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

## Belinda Bencic

Mixed Zone Interview



B. BENCIC/D. Saville

6-1, 6-2

**Q. You seem to be playing very well. How are you feeling right now?**

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah, actually feeling much better. I started to feel better in Indian Wells. We came a little bit before, but obviously, you know, it takes time to finally, you know, practice a little bit more than barely two hours. I couldn't do anything.

So after Doha, it was a good idea to go to the mountains. That helped me a lot with the whole, yeah, breathing, and since then I was able to practice a little bit more. I'm really happy, yeah, it's getting better and I'm back on track.

**Q. Swiss mountains you went to?**

BELINDA BENCIC: No, actually went to the Slovak mountains. So this time it was my boyfriend's turn to show me Slovakia. The last time I showed him Switzerland.

**Q. You could play either Osaka or Collins next. Can you talk about each of them and the different challenges they present?**

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah, well, obviously they are both players, top players. It's going to be interesting quarterfinal. I'm definitely going to watch it. You know, for now I'm enjoying myself in the semifinals. I have a day off tomorrow.

I'm going to make a plan. I have played Collins before, I have played Osaka before, so I know how it feels to play them. I'm really happy I reached a great result here and everything else is a bonus. I'm going to, yeah, enjoy and do the best I can.

**Q. A question about Naomi, because you have played her quite often. You are kind of a little bit dominating against her in the past two or three years. What do you think was the key for you to beat her? Why do you think you played well against her?**

BELINDA BENCIC: Well, I haven't played her now in a longer time, I would say. The last time was US Open 2019, if I remember correctly. Yeah, so I mean, definitely in that year I felt great playing against her. Somehow it was my form, as well, but also the matchup, I guess, your opponent plays always as good as you let her. I mean, that's my mantra a little bit to go into the matches.

Sometimes it's tough for me to play someone lower ranked but the matchup is different. You know, I don't like their game so much. They like my game. So it's always different. The rankings don't really say anything in women's tennis, as you maybe know from this tournament.

But, yeah, I just hope to give my best and continue to play the tennis I'm playing.

**Q. What are the things you like in the matchup against Naomi? I think you beat her three big tournaments in 2019.**

BELINDA BENCIC: Well, I'm not going to talk tactics now, for sure (smiling). I mean, it's just, I guess, you know, the whole form I had, the vibe.

I went to the court. I always didn't have anything to lose against her. Obviously, you know, she's the player that has to defend. Yeah, she won a lot of Grand Slams, so she's in that position.

So I guess that's also been a factor. Of course the tactical, but it's not a place to discuss it.

**Q. Nontactical, I was looking at your head-to-head. You played her very early on in your career, 2013, at a 25K in Alabama.**

BELINDA BENCIC: Yes.

**Q. What do you remember about that match? You were obviously doing so well in the juniors then. She wasn't playing any juniors. Here comes this girl your same age you probably never heard of and she won that match. What do you remember of that? That has to be kind of crazy to know you played her so long**



ago.

BELINDA BENCIC: Yes, I actually do remember that match. It was in Pelham, Alabama. I remember she was just already then hitting the ball very hard, like harder than you were used to from other junior girls. Obviously that was different because she didn't take the junior road. So she was used to playing already against woman more than me.

There she beat me, and then we kind of had, yeah, we met here again on the tournament. Yeah, that was always what made, or what she did.

**Q. Do you remember being surprised there was another like '97 who you didn't know who was playing well? You won like two slams after that in juniors. I don't know if you felt you knew everyone, the best in the world, and she was kind of coming out of this hidden direction.**

BELINDA BENCIC: No, I don't think I was surprised. I mean, there is always someone that comes from somewhere. You don't expect the whole junior tour to transition to the pros. You expect also someone in the juniors who didn't play as well in the juniors to become a good pro.

So, no, I wasn't surprised. It was like I knew her. Yeah, I mean, I knew, you know, what was going on in the other tournaments as well. It was not a surprise to me.

**Q. Ash Barty. She retired recently. Kind of similar to your age. Maybe you knew about her when you guys are like 13, 14? What do you remember about her? How do you feel about her retirement?**

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah, I think it's amazing. She's amazing. I mean, great for her, you know. She basically reached everything what she wanted. Like she said, she won Grand Slams, she's No. 1 in the world. I feel very happy for her. Like retiring at her best, it must feel great. She has really nothing to prove for anyone.

If that's really her decision, obviously -- like I'm sad she retired, she's not going to be around anymore, but in the way when I put myself in her shoes, I'm really happy for her. This is actually great how she did it, because sometimes I feel like even players feel the pressure to retire when you're No. 1, and, like, basically all the eyes are on you. Yeah, you're just obviously someone who is dominating more or less the tour right now. So it's really brave, and it's amazing and it shows who she is and how her happiness defines her without tennis.

Yeah, I mean, I remember how she won Wimbledon. She was 15, and I was like 13, 14, and I was watching. I was, like, Wow, can I win Wimbledon in one year? I'm not sure.

So obviously like we knew she's a great talent and how she played and everything. Big role model and huge respect for her.

**Q. Your ideal way to retire when you are No. 1? Naomi said that is kind of her ideal way to retire.**

BELINDA BENCIC: I mean, why not? You know, if you reach all your dreams and goals, like, you know, I can relate. Like you always have to be every day ready to make the grind, to go out of bed, to practice for six, seven hours, and then eat, sleep, repeat. So that takes a lot of energy, obviously.

In a way, I relate to her. I mean, it's everyone's own story, you know. Someone wishes to play until 35. Someone wishes to play until 25. It's very individual.

But I also really found it really cool when Flavia Pennetta retired after winning US Open. I mean, that was really cool. Why not? Why grind again if you just reached your biggest goal and you're going out at your best?

**Q. On juniors, playing with Ana Konjuh this week, was that nostalgia for you? Wimbledon 2012 I think you were together in doubles. Did you get back to talking like you were kids again? What was that moment like to team up with her again? You both won all the slams together in 2013.**

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah, we split that year. She's always stayed a very good friend. She's super nice and just so like calm off the court and even on the court. So she kind of balances me really well on the doubles court as well.

It was really nice to play with her, and we know each other like way back, even played under-14 European Championships final against each other.

It's nice to have a fellow junior. I feel like we were the top of the juniors and then we both kind of made it in the pros, and, yeah, it was nice to be around her. I feel like we were leaning on each other when we were kind of new on the tour. Just everything was new, so we were always hanging out, not be alone and be together. It's very nice to play with her.

**Q. Do you ever look back at those draws and wonder what happened to some of the names that you don't see around anymore?**

BELINDA BENCIC: I mean, yeah, sometimes you think that some people would make it more than others, and now then you know some people that had average results in juniors made it in the pros. So it's really unexpected.

But you don't really spend too much time thinking about it. Obviously it's nice to see everyone coming from the juniors and just kind of, you know, still have the vibe, because everything was a little bit friendlier in juniors, I would say. It was good times.

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