

August 15, 2014



S. HALEP/L. Safarova

6-4, 7-5

An interview with:

SIMONA HALEP

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How do you feel after the first two matches here after a long break?

SIMONA HALEP: I feel good, because today was much better than first round, first match here. I played with Lucie who is playing always very well. She's lefty, and it's not easy to adapt the game.

I'm happy that I could win the second set also, because she was up 5-4. You know, it's always a great feeling when you win.

Q. A lot of players don't particularly get the grasp of taking time off and everything. They feel, Oh, I have always gone to that event or whatever. How important is it to know that your body and maybe your head needs like a vacation from tennis?

SIMONA HALEP: Wow. I played like six months this year and then I took a vacation like one week.

So it's tough to take holiday because we have tournament every week, almost every week.

But when you have time to get a holiday you are very happy and you are enjoying a lot.

After Singapore I will take few weeks holiday in my country, Romania, to visit, because I never visited the country.

So now I feel good. The holiday was very great, great week, great 10 days. Now I have to be focused for the tennis and just to think about the matches.

Q. Back to the match, I think it was the seventh game in the first set you were up a

break, but Safarova was chipping away at it. She had a couple break points; you had 18-shot rally and then you put it away. Is that the turning point in today's match?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, it was a tough match because I took a break in second set, but she took me as well a break. I didn't keep my serve very well today. I didn't serve good.

But, you know, in the important moments I served well, so that's good. She's playing really well and her left hand is so amazing because she is opening the angles very well. And her topspin, it's on the other side, so it's difficult to return.

But I think I played aggressive. I played angles also. So I tried to play my game to do the best, and I think I did.

Q. What's it like to get all these interview requests, TV interview requests, now that you're the world No. 2? Is it a distraction at all or are you enjoying?

SIMONA HALEP: I'm enjoying. It's nice because it's my best ranking in my career, so I have to enjoy this moment. It's my best feeling now.

It's not easy to go everywhere, but I don't have very much (smiling).

Q. You're obviously No. 2, which is only one spot away from No. 1.

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, but still far.

Q. I'm just wondering, some people say they think you should have to win a Grand Slam before you come to No. 1. What do you think about that? Because it's possible it might come in another order to you.

SIMONA HALEP: I think they are two different things. To be No. 1 in the world you can without a Grand Slam, but to win a Grand Slam it's other things.

So both of them are very important in your career, but, you know, to win a Grand Slam it's something bigger for me. But also, No. 1 in the

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S Halep - 08 14 14

world, it's something special.

So it's difficult to say which one I prefer. Both if it's possible. If not, I continue my way like this. I'm not sad that I'm on second.

Q. You have obviously now played slams, you've played premier mandatory tournaments, Premier 5 tournaments. In the premier level tournaments the draws are smaller, so first and second rounds can be actually tougher than first and second rounds at the majors. How do you compare competing at the slams versus the premier level tournaments? Which one is more difficult?

SIMONA HALEP: I think in Grand Slam it's easier because you also have one day off between matches. Like you said, the first rounds can be easier, but it's not easy, because all the players are playing well at this level.

But first two rounds are much easier than premier event because here you can play with top 20, top 25. So it's very tough. Like I did today with Lucie. So it's not easy. But, you know, when you go to the tournament you don't think it's Grand Slam or premier.

In my opinion, you have just to play every match, to take every match like very important. So I did like this this year and I did a great job, so I have to keep this way of thinking about the matches.

Q. How many people are on your team?

SIMONA HALEP: About three. My mom, four.

Q. Teams seem to be expanding, but the US Open says like they give a player three badges. How do you...

SIMONA HALEP: I have some friends coming there, but my team, I have only three guys with me always. So I'm happy with my team and I don't want to change anything. No.

Q. Do you have a preference in terms of the courts here in Cincinnati? For example, here today you played your match on Court 3. You're No. 2 in the world. Safarova was a semifinalist at Wimbledon, and yet on Grandstand was Janowicz and Benneteau. Does that matter to you?

SIMONA HALEP: No. I play everywhere where they put me. It's not that important to play on Center Court or Grandstand or Court 3. Court 3

is also big, so I'm okay. I play everywhere and I try just to do my job.

Q. Before the tournament started you said that you want to play your game with imagination.

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah.

Q. So what does that mean to you? When you say to play with imagination, what does that mean?

SIMONA HALEP: To open the angles better than I do now; to try to finish the point also at the net; to take the drives sometime, because I like to finish the point like this.

You know, I always I try to hit my backhand down the line from everywhere. The serve, I want just to play sometimes with kick, but my kick is not that good.

You know, it's difficult to explain what I wanted to say with imagination. Just to go on court or to be relaxed, to do everything you think at that moment, everything you feel.

Q. You could play Maria in the next round.

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, big challenge again (smiling). Four hours.

Q. Very tough matchup for you this year.

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah.

Q. What makes her difficult to play and why has she been able to get the better of you this year?

SIMONA HALEP: Well, we played two times this year. I think, yeah, Madrid and French Open on clay, both matches. She beat me, but in three sets.

She's a great player. She's playing very well now, so it will be a big challenge for me.

I want to play against her because I want to see if on hard she will beat me again.

I just want to try my game, to play very aggressive, to open the angles like always, and to stay very focused, because she's taking a lot of time between points. So in French Open that disturbed me, but now I have experience and it will be fine.

Q. It disturbed you like you would just

wait too long and get distracted?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah. A little bit nervous between points because it was long time between the points. It's not easy to stay focused.

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