

Western & Southern Open

Friday, August 18, 2017

Simona Halep

Press Conference



S. HALEP/J. Konta

6-4, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How did you stop that from getting a little bit too complicated?

SIMONA HALEP: Well, I always complicate against Johanna Konta, the matches. I don't know why. Yeah, I was again a little bit nervous. It's normal. Few times I was very close, as well, to finish and I couldn't.

So today I just had in my mind that I have to step in in the tiebreak, to focus, and to not thinking about those five match balls. Just go in there and be aggressive like I have been all match. Today I really played okay.

Q. Is she a player, because of all the times that you guys have played each other and the circumstances in which you have played each other, that maybe there is a little bit extra something when you guys play, like -- I don't know.

SIMONA HALEP: I don't know what to say. From my side, I don't feel different. I just take, like, a normal opponent, which is a very tough match always I play against.

So, yeah, I just today I had different plan to play against her, and it worked pretty well. So now I feel that after winning this match, I feel more relaxed, more like now I saw, I really saw that I'm able to win the matches against her.

Q. You said in your last match you felt you didn't play your best tennis. You felt you were getting more towards what you expect of yourself.

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, today I played the best match so far this tournament. I could hit the ball. I could move well.

So I feel the rhythm. It's back. So I'm positive again. I'm on it again. So I feel good, and I feel thankful with the way I played tonight. Was really good.

Q. 5-2 up in the second set, and she came back at you, was there a little bit of, Oh, God, not Miami again?

SIMONA HALEP: Oh, no, no. I'm different and was not like Miami at all.

But I was upset but in a good way. I think I motivated myself, also the tough moments that I had after she came back at 5-All and also 6-5, 0-40, but then I could finish the tiebreak so strong, so everything is fine.

Q. You said that you played her a little bit differently?

SIMONA HALEP: Yeah, I have been more aggressive. And I didn't wait, like, the mistake or something like this. I just took it.

Q. She's not sort of known for being particularly a good rallier. Some of your rallies were absolutely breathtaking. Were you surprised she was able to hang in with you as well as she did?

SIMONA HALEP: No, I was not surprised. I knew she could stay there. She's very strong. I said that if I feel my legs, I'm stronger. So I have just to be there and to push her back and to hit the balls.

So I had in my mind just everywhere I am on the court, I have to hit the ball. So I hit the ball, and I think she didn't expect that, because before, I just pushed some balls when I was in defensive. So just today I tried to change that.

Q. You seem like you're moving as good as you have in a very long time. Just speed and anticipation and all that. Why? What do you chalk that up to? Just being healthy? Did you put in an additional training block? Why do you think it's coming together?

SIMONA HALEP: I'm healthy. I can move. I'm not thinking about anything on my body, so I just go for it. I worked more, I can say, and I worked every day. So I don't have days off, because before, after a good result, like four days, I was just chilling. But now I just try to change that. I'm more professional, and I really want to see where is my limit.

Q. Athletes frequently talk about learning new things about themselves. What new things have you learned about yourself this week in Cincinnati at this tournament?

SIMONA HALEP: I learned that -- actually, I knew but I couldn't believe that much that even if I play bad, in my opinion, I can win matches with good players.

So the fact that I won the first two matches, for me, was a better result than today and made me more confident, more stronger mentally, that I'm able also without my best game to win matches and to stay there. Even if I'm upset sometimes on court I think brings me energy, brings me more focus.

Q. What aspect of your game do you feel like needs the most work now between now and New York? Is there one particular area?

SIMONA HALEP: Well, it's one week, so I can't change anything. But just to stay there, to believe, to have confidence.

So it's a short time until New York. I can't change anything. Just keep the confidence high and not thinking about the result. It's everything gone. Just tennis I have to play.

Q. This is your sixth semifinal of the year, six in four months. We forget about the first three months. But back when you were injured and struggling and heading into Indian Wells and Miami, I mean, did you genuinely believe that this was around the corner?

SIMONA HALEP: No.

Q. No?

SIMONA HALEP: No. I was a little bit scared about my knee. Was my first tough injury that I ever had since I'm a professional. I didn't know what to expect, to be honest. I was down mentally.

But I was very motivated after Miami. I was motivated to work harder and to see, like I said before, where is my limit.

So I'm just trying to go the highest level, it's possible, and to see what I can achieve. I'm not thinking about anything else.

Q. So you have worked really hard. What's the one exercise in the gym that you absolutely hate doing and what do you love doing?

SIMONA HALEP: I hate running, even if I run a lot on court. But just running is boring (smiling).

And I love to do, like, weights but smaller weights. Light. I'm not -- yeah, just active and energetic exercises.

Q. So Sloane, she's a different player this week.

SIMONA HALEP: I know, since Washington.

Q. Yeah, since Washington, which was a very different match. Still a good first set she played against you. How much have you or Darren has

been paying attention to her?

SIMONA HALEP: For sure, Darren. I didn't think about Sloane till now, because I had tough matches until here.

Yeah, as I said, the match in Washington wasn't easy at all. First set was really tough. Second set, as well. But I just got the leading and then was a little bit easier for me.

But still, I expect very tough one. Is always tough to play against her. Her forehand, it's strong, big. She's serving well.

I just have, in my opinion, to be like today with the desire of winning with confidence and positive things.

I can't do anything else. Just go there and play my best, trying to play my best.