

April 4, 2019

**M. Sakkari defeats Kiki Bertens
7-6, 6-3
Third Round**

An Interview With:

MARIA SAKKARI

Q. That was a tough one out there. What do you think was the key?

MARIA SAKKARI: You know, just I thought hard, and made a lot of balls. After 4-1 down I came back with a good and solid game, I think. Obviously we had like long rallies and I had to run a lot, but I had no problem doing that. Yeah, that's it pretty much, you know. Fought hard. I never stopped believing that I could win.

Q. What were you telling yourself at 4-1 down to get yourself back in the match?

MARIA SAKKARI: Like every single point just saying come on and you can do it. And I was talking a lot to myself. Something I was not doing lately. And it really helped.

Q. When you were down 1-5 in the tiebreak, do you remember what went through your mind at that time, because you just changed everything at that point.

MARIA SAKKARI: I really don't remember what I thought at 5-1 down, but the thing that I can tell you for sure it was like, as I said before, talking to myself, telling positive things. And I was feeling well on court, so I could see that I was there. It was not like 5-1 and had no chance of coming back. So I fought and made a lot of balls, came back with some good shots, and I think that's the winner out there in the third round.

Q. Is it a different feeling to beat the defending champion? I mean she comes in here with all the confidence that she just won this tournament. Is it a different feeling to beat her?



Volvo
Car
Open



MARIA SAKKARI: I think it's negative and positive being the defending champion. Obviously I don't know how she was feeling, but I can imagine she was feeling a little bit of pressure, of course, defending the title. But I just had in my mind that it's Kiki Bertens, a Top 10 player, very good player, and I just played my game and played like I would play with anyone else this day.

Q. Maria, you have a good record against her, 3 and 2 now, I guess, and you've beaten her twice on clay. What is it about how your games locked up together to make it a very competitive and favorable matchup for you?

MARIA SAKKARI: You know, I don't know. We just like each other's game and we get to play good matches always, but -- I don't know. I think it's one of the players that I've played the most. Between her and Kontaveit maybe. We played like three times last year, so we know each other quite well. We get to practice with each other. And it's nothing specific that makes me beat her or her beat me. But it's just that we always have great fights with each other.

Q. And how does it feel to make your first quarterfinal of the season?

MARIA SAKKARI: Pretty nice, I have to say. I haven't won three matches before in a long time, and I really wanted to win more than two in a row. Obviously now I won more. I'm not saying that. But it feels very good, gaining a lot of confidence. And it's great, because I really want to play good on clay this year without having a lot of expectations. But starting good the clay season gives me a lot of confidence.

Q. When you get to this point in a tournament, do you let yourself start thinking ahead, thinking I'm one shot away from the semis, I'm this close on the finals? How do you stay focused on just the next match?

Transcripts Provided By:

Kelly McKee, CCR, RPR, CRR
Savannah, GA
kadmcr@yahoo.com
912-441-0821

MARIA SAKKARI: You know what, I don't think about the semis or the final because I have, I mean, very good players to play ahead. I mean either Buzarnescu or Wozniacki. They're so tough to play. So I'm just going to go out there, try my best, play my game, and if I get the win, it's good; if not, then I will accept it and just move forward.

Q. With these first few matches on clay under your belt, where do you assess your level is at or where do you think you can improve?

MARIA SAKKARI: On clay or in general?

Q. Or in general.

MARIA SAKKARI: On clay. Yeah, of course the good thing is I have a lot of room for improvement, which is a very good thing, because I see that I can beat good players playing like this. But if I improve as well. So for sure my serve, for sure my net game. Sometimes attack more and like go like inside the court. I'm working on it. So, I mean, I will try to do it as much as I can.

Q. Do you celebrate with any kind of Greek food or anything like that in Charleston or do you steer away from our Greek food because it's not anything near what you have at home?

MARIA SAKKARI: I've been once two years ago. It was pretty good, I have to say. I'm going back home after this tournament, so it's not like I really miss Greek food. I prefer to try other cuisines. And you have great food here. I haven't thought about where I am going to go tonight.

That was a question I asked before getting into my match. I asked my coach, where are we going to eat tonight, if I win? And he was like, no, even if you lose, we are going to go out to eat. But if you win, "I will drink a beer!"

I don't drink alcohol. But he's going to drink one.

Q. Maria, have you had a chance to look around Charleston other than the restaurants?

MARIA SAKKARI: Not really. Unfortunately not. But I've heard that and I read that it's a town that has a lot of history. I really

would like to. Do you have anything to suggest? I'll ask the player services.

Q. Just to clarify, you win the match and he gets to drink a beer?

MARIA SAKKARI: He gets to drink a beer, of course. I don't drink alcohol. And he's on a very strict nutrition, so he's not drinking. And he was like, "if you win tomorrow, then I will drink a beer." After a long time.

Q. It's the weirdest bet. But anyways.

MARIA SAKKARI: Why? I mean he hasn't had a beer for a long time. I don't drink, so you cannot have this bet.

Q. Another question is, just speaking of Tom, the decision to kind of make him your kind of solo coach and head coach, can you talk through that a little bit and what is it -- obviously we all remember him from Stanford or San Jose, but what is it about him that makes him a good coach for you?

MARIA SAKKARI: Well, you know, even though it's weird because he's only 23 years old, so same age as me, he's a very -- it's not weird that he's positive. It's weird that he has a lot of experience, you know. He sees things very well. He wants to learn. He's a hard worker. And I really like to have him around me. So, you know, we had tough times after Australia. We were both not in a good mood because I was not playing well, and it was tough for both because we're a team. But, you know, he never stopped believing in me, and he was like, I know you can do it. Just keep working. We had some long sessions after Miami and Key Biscayne. And he was like here are the results. You see, hard work pays off. Even though it sounds, you know, everybody is saying the same thing but it's real.

Q. Plus he gets to drink beer.

MARIA SAKKARI: Exactly. I hope he drinks every day from now on, every time I win a match. (Laughs).

End of Interviews

Transcripts Provided By:

KellyMcKee, CCR, RPR, CRR
Savannah, GA
kadmcr@yahoo.com
912-441-0821

Transcripts Provided By:

Kelly McKee, CCR, RPR, CRR
Savannah, GA
kadmcr@yahoo.com
912-441-0821