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Sunday, April 10, 2022

**B. Bencic def. O. Jabeur
6-1, 5-7, 6-4
Final Round**

Q. Belinda, incredible effort today. How are you feeling right now?

BELINDA BENCIC: I'm feeling really good. I'm super relieved, just really happy. Yeah. I don't know really what to say. I was just celebrating with the team already, and, yeah, super proud to win the first title on clay. And, yeah, I don't really know what to say. Yeah, I think it was a week where I was fighting. You know, I was like two points away from the exit in the first round, and I feel like this is how you win the tournament. And I'm just really relieved I served it out. I think Ons, she took everything from me today. And at some point I just really didn't know what to do anymore, and I think she played great in the second set. In the first set, of course, maybe she was a little bit nervous, and I was just, yeah, trying to fight every point.

Q. How did you, especially after that second set, it was so close, how did you recalibrate for the third set, and then what were your emotions stepping up to serve out the match at 5-4?

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah. In the second set, I felt like at 5-5 I had so many chances to break her, and I -- I didn't use

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them. You know, I missed a couple of forehands, and I thought I had to take more of a risk, because I was playing it safe, and I thought that was a mistake. And then I went out just to regroup and just to try again in the third set. And I was like, okay, I felt more relaxed in the third set.

In the second set I think I got a little bit tight. And then I just tried to do the same thing again, you know, just tried to work and kind of play my game again. And then serving it out, I really don't know how. Like I was so nervous. I was just like, okay, just put the serve in. And then somehow like my instincts, they took over, and I played those rallies, and I think I played great three points, and then on the match point I just kind of, yeah, put it in. And, thankfully, she missed, and it was really just emotions like feeling over me. So, yeah.

Q. Belinda, what does a win like this do for you not just confidence wise, but tennis wise and where do you think it can bring you the rest of the year?

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah. I mean, it does a lot for my confidence. Already Miami did, and I'm really happy I kind of transitioned that to the clay, because I didn't expect this kind of result. I just wanted to do the best I can, and I was really focusing on my game and what I had to do, like in the practice and just always, you know, doing the right things. And, yeah, I'm happy kind of transitioned to my game, because in Indian wells I didn't feel so great, and also in the practice I was struggling, and I just couldn't find my game. And then I felt like I kind of broke this bad momentum and I was working hard and just trying to change it. So I'm really happy in Miami it

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worked out. And I feel like this is like the tournaments that you break through and then it goes like the right way. So I'm happy about it.

Q. Going a little off that, when you look at the distinguished list of winners that have won this tournament, what does it mean to you to put yourself along the names of some of the legends of the game?

BELINDA BENCIC: It means a lot, and especially this is the 50th anniversary from Charleston, and it makes me so happy that I am among those names, and especially when I saw yesterday all the former champions and past champions from Charleston, they came here, and they celebrated this tournament. It means a lot. And also shows how great this tournament is, because so many players came back and just wanted to be here for the celebration, and I think really Bob and Eleanor, they did so good. And every year, you know, I mean, I try to play this event every year because I just love this tournament a lot. And they take great care from the players. And, yeah, for me, it is emotional thing because I played here when I was 16, 17 and kind of it was the first tournament. So to win this tournament, it means a lot. It was always a very nice goal for me.

Q. Congratulations, Belinda.

BELINDA BENCIC: Thank you.

Q. Now that you've won a clay tournament.

BELINDA BENCIC: Yes.

Q. Yeah.

BELINDA BENCIC: Now the pressure starts on clay. Right?

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Q. Well, yeah. That's what I was asking to ask you. Is it more pressure or is it some relief and maybe a way to flip that around?

BELINDA BENCIC: Exactly. I always think it's more pressure from the media and the people that's going to ask me more questions. In Roland-Garros, now you have a clay title, you have to do well on the clay and everything. But for me, it's really -- I kind of flipped that switch by really not thinking about I was on clay and not thinking about what I have to do and how I have to slide or not slide or I don't know what. And for me this is, yeah, just really a great way to show myself that I can do it on every surface when I play my game and when I, you know, just doing the right things. So, also, as I said after the Olympics, for me it's not pressure, but it's really something that just flips and kind of brings me more freedom, I would say, so to show that I can do it in Olympics and I can do it here on the clay, it's like a big challenge that I've overcome in myself, and it helps me going forward. So for me it's not pressure. For me it's something that finally I achieved something and I can just relax playing the next tournaments forward.

Q. Celebration plans?

BELINDA BENCIC: Yes. Some photo shooting, I think, in the city, and then we will see. I think my team is upstairs, and we don't know how they're staying. They are maybe pretty happy. Let's say it like this. And I think probably the flight is tomorrow. So for sure we will have a celebration. It's a tight few months. From the first March we are away, and we are flying

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back home tomorrow. So we are so happy we're flying tomorrow back home.

Q. I was going to ask, you said when you were 17 you had a Nutella cookie when you lost.

BELINDA BENCIC: Yes.

Q. What's on the menu tonight?

BELINDA BENCIC: You know what, I really want to go to Krispy Kreme doughnuts. I really love doughnuts, and while in the U.S. I think this is the most important. And also I want to go to Chipotle tomorrow before the flight because it's my last chance. I love like cheap meals, and yeah, my favorite now is for sure doughnuts because I've been eating like healthy, and I was like looking on my diet and everything. But now it's the time to eat something bad.

Q. Belinda, how do you feel about your career progression? You've won a couple of times at 15. It took a couple more years, and you won a couple more. You win the Olympics last year, and now it's only five, six months and you're winning again. Do you feel like you're becoming more consistent, a more consistent champion to be able to compete for titles like this?

BELINDA BENCIC: Are we supposed to wake up now or -- (laughs). Yeah, I felt like my career, you know, it was maybe complicated. Some would say it's like wasted some years and just had a lot of injuries, but I feel like from everyone the past is different, and my career was really good at the start. I had a great junior career, and then I went straight to the pros, and I did well in everything, and then some injuries came

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and it was not going maybe as smooth as everyone was thinking. But for me it was like, okay, this is like the top of women's tennis. It's not easy. And maybe I had some years where I had to really figure out myself and find myself and kind of get back to what I'm doing the best and appreciate tennis more after the injuries. But I never felt like my career is wasted or something. So now I'm really enjoying and doing the best I can. I'm 25 years old. I still feel like I'm pretty young and I still have a lot of time. And, yeah, I feel like with the Olympics, you know, it's kind of complete. So I felt like the pressure came off of me because before that I always felt like, okay, I have to prove I can win something big, and I'm just not this prodigy that never wins something. But after the Olympics I felt like it's going better for me. And I'm improving my game and just going, I don't know, steps forward and maybe a little bit closer to big titles as well, like Grand Slams and just playing quarterfinals, semifinals of Miami. And I'm saying to myself, you know, the more chances I give myself, the more I can use. So it's important for me, and yeah, I just want to keep going like this. And I'm really happy I used my first chance on clay and for the title.

Q. Belinda, Ons talked about the difficulty she had seeing the ball, especially early on with the shadows.

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah.

Q. Was that a problem for you at all?

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah, it was a big problem, to be honest, on that side. I felt like it was very difficult to return the serve. But, also, just generally I felt like that was the worst

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side. You know, I was like, okay, win maybe one or two games on that side and then you can be on the better side, seeing the ball better. So, yeah, I mean, it was a little bit tough really with the shadow. I played, I think, against keys, it was the same situation. So I'm happy I got a little bit used to it. But it was very difficult. Yes.

Q. There's a lot of emotion for Ons today both on court and then in here with us. How have you -- I don't know if you want to offer advice or how have you in the challenges you were just talking about in your career been able to deal with disappointment and learning from situations like that?

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah. And I felt really bad when she was crying in the trophy ceremony, and I just, I don't know, I just felt like I wanted to let her know that she is doing everything she can to win this kind of title and I think this is the most important thing and sometimes the outcome is out of your control because something just wants to have it this or the other way. So there's nothing you can do about it. Sometimes it's meant to be one way. And for me it was also very difficult. I lost a lot of finals. I don't have a positive final record. And it's hard to accept sometimes, because you feel like you play an amazing tournament and you lose the last match and you are kind of disappointed with yourself. But, still, you feel like you always have to feel like you're making the step in front, and I think Ons, she showed incredible fight and in every match she tries to do the best. And I know her off court as well, and like I see her in Sydney we were like spending so much time

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together, also making the recovery together. You know how she said she uses the red light and everything. So we also -- I am also using it and I recommend this to her and then she recommends to me other things for therapy and everything. So I feel like she does everything right to make her career like the best as possible. And I feel like if you keep doing that, then it will reward you, like later or sooner. So I just believe that sport is fair at one point, but sometimes you cannot feel it right away. So sometimes you lose, but then you feel later it's good for something.

Q. Do you have a trophy to color in on the flight back?

BELINDA BENCIC: No. And you know, she told me in the locker room because I saw in her last press conference she said she gives me like her face to color in. (Laughs). So I read it and I was like, okay. And I showed her before the match my coloring book. And she was like oh yeah very nice, like you don't go out of the lines. She actually complimented my talent. (Laughs). And she didn't give me her face. I don't know what she did overnight, but she should definitely give me. (Laughs).

End of Interview

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