V. AZARENKA/S. Williams

6-3, 6-1

An interview with:

VICTORIA AZARENKA

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Congratulations. You looked like you were about to explode with excitement at the end. How do you feel now that you've had the chance to consider your first big title and beating the world No. 1?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, I was so happy. It was the biggest win of my career so far. I was just so happy to finish that match, because I was getting a little bit nervous in the end.

Now it's like all energy went down and I'm a little bit calmer now. But it was a lot of excitement.

Q What were you thinking in that last game when you were struggling a little bit? Were you thinking about what you needed to do, or trying to put your situation out of your mind?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: No, I just had to stay calm and play the same way as I was playing. I was just, you know, getting overexcited of winning the match, because here is the match point.

I think, yeah, okay, I got it now, and then she plays a good shot or I make a double fault. So just after the second one, I thought that I have to put first serve in, because it was tough serving with the sun, and I just had to keep going the same way no matter what.

Q. At what point did you know that Serena was hurt, and did you try to block that out of your mind?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, you could see the leg tape right away from the match. But I wasn't really paying attention too much, because I had to play my game and I had to keep her moving as much as I could.

I wasn't paying too much attention on her.

Q. Did you try to take advantage of it by hitting to the backhand and stretch her wide on her backhand?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, it was more of my tactics for today, so it wasn't that because she was hurt on her left leg that I was doing it more.

Q. Did you get any indication before the game? Yesterday, did anyone say that she looked like she was struggling? She was hobbling a bit against Venus.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: No. I didn't hear it from anybody.

Q. What are you doing better to be able to create a win like this for yourself today?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, I was more consistent and more aggressive. I would say I was always trying to put pressure and I was just, like I said, believing in myself so much.

No matter what, I have to play and keep going and I can win.

Q. I know you said you were emotional at the end of the match. Overall how did you feel you controlled your nerves and emotions?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I think I controlled it very well for the first big final. I wasn't getting upset on any ball. I was just happy to play every point.

Q. How about before? Like last night, did you have any trouble going sleep, or this morning were you nervous?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: No, I was good.

Q. You weren't nervous before the match?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: No.

Q. Does that surprise you? So often in these situations particularly a young player gets overwhelmed by the occasion. Were you

surprised that you handled it so well?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, I guess. But I was preparing myself for that. I never think about the match until it's right before the warm up or something. I never do, so I wasn't thinking about it last night or today.

That's why I probably don't get that nervous as maybe somebody else.

Q. During the warmup when you see Serena across the net, is it like any other match or like a much bigger deal?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, it was a much bigger deal because it was a full crowd. When they said, Here's Serena Williams, the crowd pretty much exploded.

Yeah, it was -- I mean, I was just so happy to play against her. I like the way she plays, and I just want to get a rematch and try to do my best.

Q. Were you careful about what you ate last night?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah.

Q. Did you text your goalie sponsor, the hockey goalie?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Not yet. But he will call me probably in a little bit.

Q. How did that happen? How did you guys get together with an NHL hockey goalie?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I been telling this story for a week now. My mom knew his wife, and that's how we pretty much got introduced. Then they just invited me to come over and live with them, and I've been living with them for like four years now.

Q. Second family, huh?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yes.

Q. Do you think you would be in this position if you hadn't moved to the United States? Do you think you would be at this level?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: You never know what could have happened, but I don't think it would be the same.

Q. You're No. 8 now. Where do you go from there?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Hopefully to No. 7 and further.

Q. What are you going to do to celebrate? Anything special you're going to buy or something you want or to go do?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, I'm not allowed to drink in the States, yet, but I'll definitely go celebrate somewhere in the restaurant.

Q. Can you wrap your mind around $600,000?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, I can spend it in one day.

Q. On what? What's your weakness?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: So many things. You can buy a car, jewelry, a watch or whatever.

Q. What car do you drive?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Mercedes.

Q. You hit the inside out backhand and down the line backhand very well. Is that a relatively new thing, or is it always a strength?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, backhand has always been the weapon for me ever since I was a child.

Q. Who are the people you went over to hug after match point?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: It was my coaches. My tennis coach Antonio and my fitness coach, Mark.

Q. What are their names?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Antonio Van Grichen, and Mark Wellington is fitness coach.

Q. Could you speak a little about Antonio, because he comes from a country with big tennis tradition.

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, I mean, Antonio is for me the best coach. We been so long together, and he's been helping me with everything I ever need. We had our tough moments on court and off court, but we were always together.

I mean, without him I wouldn't have done it.

Q. Do you feel you're better on the hard or clay, and what Grand Slam would you love to win the most?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I would love to win any, actually. But my favorite's always been

US Open and Australian Open.

Q. Your parents are not here, right?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: My mother is here.

Q. Does it take anything away from your victory that your opponent was hurt?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: I mean, I don't know what way to answer that. I mean, what can I say? I don't even know what to say.

Q. How will this news be received at home in Belarus? Will this be big news?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah. Actually, I'm waiting for the president's call so far, but he didn't call me.

Q. Have you talked to him before?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, when I was a child. Once.

Q. How did that happen?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, he came to one of the tennis tournaments and I was presenting flowers to him, so that's how.

Q. How old were you?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: Eight or nine, yeah.

Q. Same president?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah.

Q. Did somebody tell that you he was going to be calling you today then?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, they just called my mom after the match and wanted to talk to me.

But he's actually been pretty supportive. He always sends congratulation notes and letters. He's very into sports.

Q. What's the most popular sport in Belarus, and how does tennis rank?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: I would say hockey.

Q. How popular is tennis there now?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: I would say it's the second sport, yeah. Like biggest sport there -- we have so many facilities right now and so many kids, so we always have really good juniors.

Hopefully they will make it better to the pros.

Q. Your mom, did she play or she worked at a tennis center?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, she just worked. She didn't play.

Q. How about your dad? What does he do?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: My dad, he's -- he teaches how to drive, driving instructor. He used to play volleyball, and he's playing right now, too.

Q. What level did he reach in volleyball? Olympic level or club?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: No, no, not high level. He just loves the sport.

Q. Has Max been the most famous player from Belarus, or am I forgetting somebody?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, Max definitely, and also Natasha Zvereva. She's also very famous.

I would say Max is the biggest one.

Q. Do you believe you can get to No. 1, or is it something you don't really think about?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: Well, that's the goal. That's the whole reason I'm playing, you know. I think everybody's goal is to try to be No. 1.

I'm not going to say, yeah, I'm going to be there, but I'll try to do my best.

Q. What did Serena say to you at the net?
VICTORIA AZARENKA: Congratulations.

Q. Do you have any thoughts on why the Eastern European women have been doing well in the recent years? There are quite a few of them always in contention.
VICTORIA AZARENKA: I think it's just the mentality. Like the Russians, a lot of us, we didn't have many things when we were growing up. It's just the hunger for playing and just wanting to do better and get as many opportunities as you can to be better in your life.

Q. When you were about to win, was

there a very nervous moment in one of your matches?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, it was. You could see me double fault.

Q. How are your relations with the Williams outside of the field? Are you friend of them?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: I wouldn't say I'm a friend, but they're always very nice to me and very friendly.

Q. What about the ATP players?

VICTORIA AZARENKA: Yeah, a lot of them are friendly, too.

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