

# Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships

Tuesday, February 20, 2018

## CiCi Bellis

Press Conference

C. BELLIS/E. Mertens

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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. As you said on court, must have been a very pleasing win. She's probably not 100% healthy. Nevertheless, once you cross that line, you have to go out there to win.**

CICI BELLIS: Yeah, definitely. I was really happy about the win. I think I played pretty well. Just tried to be as solid as I could, tried to extend the points as long as possible.

**Q. There was a bit of a dip at the start of the second. Were you at all worried?**

CICI BELLIS: Yeah, I think it was maybe the second game of the second set. Yeah, a super long game. I think both of our levels dipped a little bit. But we both picked it up a little bit after that.

That happens during matches. I was playing pretty solid in the first set. It's tough to play a full match like that. Just glad I finished strong.

**Q. Quarterfinals here last year. You have Garbine next. What are your thoughts, to get that elusive first title...**

CICI BELLIS: Yeah, I mean, I've never played her before. It's definitely going to be a new experience for me. It will be fun. She's an unbelievable player. Yeah, she's been at the top of the game for a while now. It will be great for me just to see where my game lines up against another one of the top players. Just try to enjoy it. I'm having a lot of fun out here.

**Q. Do you feel you belong on the WTA Tour? A year ago you were kind of the new kid on the block. Do you feel content, happy, confident there now?**

CICI BELLIS: Yeah, definitely a lot more than last year. I remember an interview here I did last year, somebody asked me that, I wasn't sure yet. Now I definitely feel like I belong here more.

I know a lot more people on the tour now. I have a lot more friends. It's definitely more comfortable for me.



**Q. When did things start to change in that respect?**

CICI BELLIS: I think when a few more girls my age started playing these tournaments. Throughout juniors I've been friends with these girls. It's pretty much just like my junior friends coming up.

I think just basically last summer, I would say.

**Q. Name some names.**

CICI BELLIS: Marketa Vondrousova, one of my best friends, doubles partners forever. Awesome having her around. Yeah, just a few other girls that have been super nice.

**Q. When you were in the juniors, what did the top of the game look like to you? Serena Williams was winning. Did it look more intimidating at that time or now, given the solidity of the top 10, do you find that tougher?**

CICI BELLIS: That's tough. I think obviously when Serena was dominating, no one really could beat her. Now that she's been away for a bit, I think basically everyone in the top 10, even top 20, is so strong. Any of them can beat each other on any given day, pretty much. Obviously the top ones are a little more consistent.

That's a good question. I think both are definitely difficult. I think now I would say there's a little more depth just because everyone kind of feels like at the top of the game they can be No. 1 in the world. Yeah, I don't know, I guess we'll see when she comes back.

**Q. 12 months on, what are the different things, changes you have seen within yourself?**

CICI BELLIS: In the last year?

**Q. Yes.**

CICI BELLIS: I think as a player I've matured a lot. I've kind of understood how I need to play the game. I've matured physically, gotten a lot stronger. I feel mentally I've gotten a lot stronger, too.

Pretty much everything that I've aged in the last year has gotten a lot better.

**Q. Can you do any sort of special preparation to take on the most senior players?**

CICI BELLIS: No, not any different than all the other girls. I think you can't really think too much about who's on the other side of the net. Just kind of play the ball when you're playing girls like that.