



# Sharapova eyes strong finish to season

## Tianjin

**M**aria Sharapova is looking for a strong finish to a season that began with a doping ban and hit a high in China on Sunday when she won her first title in over two years.

The former world number one, who returned from the 15-month ban in April, defeated Belarusian teenager Aryna Sabalenka 7-5 7-6(8) in the final of the Tianjin Open on Sunday.

Sharapova said she was looking forward to building on the success next week in Moscow at the Kremlin Cup, a tournament she has not appeared at since 2007.

“Obviously coming there with the title already means a lot, but I do really want to finish strong,” said the Russian, who accepted a wild card for the event.

“I don’t remember the last time that I played three events in a row. But I will give it everything I have got and I know I have so many amazing fans there.”

The five-times grand slam champion said the Tianjin title, the 36th of her career, was special.

“It has been a couple of years since I have held the winner’s trophy. It is a great feeling,” she said.

“When you start all the way from the beginning of the tournament and then you end up playing the final in a full stadium with so much enthusiasm and energy and you are the one that wins the last point, just everything falls into place.

“You have to appreciate those moments, never take them for granted.”

Sharapova takes on Slovakia’s Magdalena Rybarikova in the opening round in Moscow. (Reuters)

Maria Sharapova



Russia's Pavlyuchenkova Anastasia poses for photo after the singles final match against Australia's Daria Gavrilova at WTA Hong Kong Tennis Open

## Pavlyuchenkova beats Gavrilova in Hong Kong final

### Hong Kong

**R**ussian sixth seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova claimed her third title of the year by beating seventh-seeded Australian Daria Gavrilova in the final of the Hong Kong Tennis Open on Sunday.

Pavlyuchenkova prevailed 5-7 6-3 7-6(3) in a match heavily disrupted by the weather.

The final started later than scheduled due to a typhoon off the coast of Hong Kong and

the players then had to endure a half-hour rain delay with the deciding set delicately poised at 5-5.

Pavlyuchenkova’s victory followed wins in Monterrey in April and Rabat in May.

“It was not easy mentally as this morning we were not sure if we were going to play or not,” the 26-year-old said. “I just won a title so I’m extremely happy with that. It was a really, really tough match.” (Reuters)

## Hamilton was ‘weird’ as a team-mate: Button

**J**enson Button has revealed details of his relationship with Lewis Hamilton while the pair were team mates at McLaren.

The pair drove alongside each other from 2010 and 2012, until Hamilton left to join Mercedes.

In an extract published yesterday, Button recounts his amazement at discovering Hamilton had publicly released the team’s telemetry information social media to show why Button had out-qualified him at Spa in 2012.

“Quite what was in his thinking, I couldn’t say,” wrote Button. “Certainly any displeasure he was showing was aimed at the team, not me, but I ended up being collateral damage because you don’t make telemetry public. You just don’t.”

“I wasn’t gasping in horror concerning his use of ‘WTF’” Button added. “I like to see drivers expressing themselves.”

“The screengrab showed the kind of things you work hard to keep hidden from your rivals. I made my feelings known about that. The

official version was that I was ‘disappointed’. Had I gone with my unofficial reaction it would have made ‘WTF’ seem very tame indeed.”

“But at the same time I knew it wasn’t personal. Bit dumb maybe. But not an ‘I hate Jenson’ thing so much as an ‘I’m fed up with McLaren’ thing.”

Button revealed Hamilton also challenged him over whether he ignored an order from the team not to overtake him during the 2010 Turkish Grand Prix when the pair were running first and second.

“He came straight out and asked me about it: ‘Did you pass me against team orders?’ He was the winner. Jesus.”

“No, I told him, ‘I did not pass you against orders. I was never told not to pass you.’”

Button described Hamilton’s decision to leave McLaren for Mercedes as “a shame” because he’d “enjoyed our rivalry.”

“Off the track, however, he was still being a bit weird.”

Button’s autobiography “Life to the Limit” will be published on Thursday. (f1fanatic)



Jenson Button speaks to Lewis Hamilton