



**[Simona Halep](#) battled past [Victoria Azarenka](#) in an absolute marathon on Wednesday afternoon to reach the semifinals of the [US Open](#) for the first time in her career.**

After taking the first set, 6-3, Halep watched on as Azarenka, a two-time [US Open](#) finalist, shifted gears, powering through the second set, 6-4, and building an early 2-0 in the third. After Halep broke back to catch up to 2-1 and serving at 40-15, the rain started to fall and the two left the court.

But once they came back the No.2-seeded Romanian was just too solid, winning five of the next seven games to close the No.20-seeded Belarusian out after two hours and 40 minutes, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4.

Halep finished with more than twice as many winners as unforced errors on the stats sheet: 40 to 19.

"It was an amazing match. She played fantastic," Halep said. "In the first set I was playing my best tennis, and I knew I could win the match, but I also knew she's very strong and she never gives up.

"After the first set I was a bit behind the baseline, which wasn't good, and she was dominating me on the court. I was running well, but I didn't have enough power to hit from very far off the court.

"The rain delay was perfect for me. It was unbelievable that I had another chance. So I said with my coach, 'I have to do everything I did in the first set and get this one, because it's made for me.'"

Azarenka, meanwhile, was about even - she finished with 38 winners to 42 unforced errors.

"I was trying to find solutions. But she played really well today," Azarenka said afterwards.

"I was a little bit surprised by the pace of her ball, to be honest. I think that, and a couple of free points that I gave away today, cost me the match a little bit. But I have to say she played very well."

Awaiting Halep in the semifinals will be the No.26 seed, [Flavia Pennetta](#) , who battled back to defeat No.5 seed [Petr a Kvitova](#) in three sets earlier on in the day, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 ( [read more here](#) ).

[Pennetta leads Halep in their head-to-head series, 3-1](#) , though [Halep won their only 2015 meeting](#) .

"It looks like she's not that powerful like Vika, but she is," Pennetta said. "She's more powerful, I think. And to make a winner against her you have to finish the point seven times. She's always there.

"The ball just always comes back, and it's going to be like a marathon, I think."

\*\* <http://www.wtatennis.com/news/article/4990783/title/halep-survives-azarenka-at-us-open>