

# Citi Open

Sunday, August 1, 2021

Washington D.C.

## Rafael Nadal

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. It's your first time here. Curious as to how you feel physically ahead of the tournament, how long it typically takes you to get a feel for the court and to get yourself prepared for playing on the hard courts? What is your take about what it means to you as you head into the US Open, you, Djokovic and Federer are each tied at 20 Grand Slams apiece?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, hello. Good afternoon.

Yeah, yeah, I'm quite good. I have been going through some issues after Roland Garros, so I was not able to play a couple of important events for me, like Wimbledon and Olympics.

But here I am. I am excited to be in Washington for the first time of my life and to play this event for the first time, too, that has a great history. Of course, I have been practicing well at home, but I need some competitive practices, no?

I still have couple of more days practicing here with the guys. That's what I need today, play some sets, practice with the professional-level guys. That going to help me, no?

I don't know how long it will take to recover everything, but the only thing I can say is I'm here just to try my best in every single moment. I hope the last couple of days of practices keep helping me to be competitive enough for the first round.

I am excited to be back playing in America after more than a year without playing here, especially playing in front of the full crowd, no, full stadiums. It's something we are not seeing for such a long time.

So going to be a great feeling again and I am very excited about it.

**Q. Speaking of practice, you practiced last night with Seb Korda. I know you played him before. What do**

**you like about his game and how has he improved?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, we have been practicing yesterday together. I think he's young. Good physical look, good serve, good shots from the baseline. I think he's a great guy, complete player.

He has a lot of things to do in the next years in our sport. I think I always believe since I saw him play that he going to have the chance to be one of the best players of the world.

Let's see. Is always the same. I think he has all the things that he needs to be a definitely top guy. Of course, then things are not easy and you need to keep improving.

But I definitely believe, if you ask me, he going to be a great one.

**Q. Looking ahead to New York, what Novak Djokovic is going to be trying to accomplish there, I'm wondering whether the idea of a calendar year Grand Slam just always seemed like something too hard for a player to achieve in this era? What quality or trait of Novak's do you think is most valuable as he tries to do that and go four-for-four at the slams this year?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, he already won three. So when you win three, you can win four, without a doubt, no? He did 75% of the way. He going to be playing on hard court, probably his best surface. So why not?

Of course is something difficult. Going to be another guys that wanted to achieve the last slam of the season. But, yeah, of course he's one of the clear favorites, probably the most favorite player to achieve that.

Yeah, what he achieved this year is something, well, amazing. Let's see. I don't know. I definitely believe that he can do it, without a doubt.

**Q. Can you talk through a bit of your thinking on the scheduling for this summer. This is a different schedule than you've played before, coming to Washington, skipping Wimbledon, skipping the Olympics. What was your thought process deciding**



**this is going to be the right schedule for you this year?**

RAFAEL NADAL: My body decided for myself, of course. If I had to choose, I will never miss Wimbledon and Olympics. But I was not able to compete in these events after the clay court season. I had some issues in my foot, so I had to stop playing tennis for around 20 days, not touching a racquet for 20 days. I started slowly, practicing half an hour, then little bit more. So I went through the whole process.

When I see the calendar, my goal was to be here in Washington. Here I am. So that's the main thing for me. An important one. Playing in Washington allow me to be on the tour one week before than what I do usually for this part of the season. But missing Wimbledon, I think that's the right thing to do. The decision I think is the right one.

Super happy to be here. Tournament organization is doing amazing. I can't thank enough the tournament owner, tournament director because they show a lot of interest on myself playing here since I thought that was a real option to play here.

Yeah, I am excited. Then I need to find again the level of tennis that I need to be competitive, no? Something that I hope to be able to made that happen hopefully here in Washington, if not the next couple of weeks.

**Q. What does it feel like to be somewhere new for the first time? You don't get to go to too many new tournaments. It's a 500 level event for you, sort of a rare thing. How does it feel to be at a new place at this point of your career?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Feel great. Feel great, no? I love to be here in Washington because is not only a new event for me, is a new city. I am able to visit one of the most important cities in the world. And honestly, it's a very beautiful city. I have been able to walk around little bit the last couple of days. I am very impressed. I hope to have a chance to visit little bit more the city during the next couple of days.

But what I saw, so beautiful. A very green city, lower buildings than most of the American big cities. I am enjoying the city, I'm enjoying the people. Yeah, having fun.

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