

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Wednesday, 16 September 2020

Roma, Italia

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

N. DJOKOVIC/S. Caruso

6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You said before the tournament that this was a great opportunity to play, after US Open, to recover energy. Do you think that today on court you recovered happiness?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I wouldn't say I recovered happiness, because I'm happy regardless of tennis. You know, I'm happy in life, and I draw my happiness from other things. I don't draw it only if I win or lose tennis match. So that was absolutely fine.

Obviously what I was referring to is the situation in New York. That was the first time that something like this happened to me, and of course mentally, you know, I was kind of up and down a little bit for four or five days after that.

And then, you know, the training started on clay. I had really good three, four practice days. Preparation was fine. Lead-up to this first match was fine.

I was actually looking forward to get the official match as soon as possible after what happened in New York, because I feel like the sentiment on the court needs to be positive, and I need to kind of remove anything that can possibly cause any kind of issues to me if there is something.

So I didn't feel that I had any mental or emotional blockages or any dramas playing a match today. In contrary, I felt very comfortable playing. It was a hot day against Caruso who already played three matches here, clay court specialist.

It was a very good test for me. I'm very pleased with the way I handled myself in important moments. I was in control of the match. Served well when I needed to to come up with a big serve and moved well. Constructed the points as the clay courts demand, because it's obviously



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completely different surface in terms of building the point tactically.

Everything went well. I'm very pleased.

Q. I'd like to know if you consider yourself still unbeaten in 2020? And also if you're planning to meet Nadal and Gaudenzi in Rome, thinking that one of the two is less difficult to persuade than the other? Who is that?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: You always have the best questions. First of all, look, I don't consider myself unbeaten in general. You know, everybody is, how can I say, beatable?

So I know that I didn't finish the match in US Open. Obviously it ended the way it ended, but officially it's the first loss of the year.

That's fine. You know, I don't really pay attention to that anymore. The important thing is that the confidence is still there. Regardless of the change of surface, I still feel comfortable and confident about my game.

So hopefully I can just build that stride more and more as I'm moving deeper in this tournament and prior to Roland Garros, obviously.

And the second question was regarding Andrea. I did meet Andrea. We did have a player meeting, and he did a presentation for us. It was about two days ago. We stayed for about two-and-a-half hours. I stayed all the way through, and I had a chat with him, as well, privately.

We don't have any issues together. We always had very transparent and open relationship, Andrea and myself. We have known each other for many years in Monaco when he used to live there with his family. I respect him a lot. Obviously he's president of ATP.

The main point of the players association, if that's something that you're referring to, as I was saying in New York, is not that we want to fight ATP, ITF, Grand Slams, or anybody else. A lot of people have gotten the players association wrong, and I was trying to answer the questions.

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Obviously people construct the storylines the way they want to, and I understand that. I respect everybody has their own opinions. But we never said, I never said, Vasek never said, or anybody who is part of the association, that we want to boycott or we want to separate ourselves from ATP or anything like that.

We want to work together in this ecosystem with ATP, with everyone else. We have, as I said again, we are not just men's players association. We want women to be involved, as well. There are around 200 WTA players that signed the paper, and we are discussing to get them in, as well. That will happen very soon.

And, you know, the players association is going forward. I think it's very important for us players to have 100% player representation, and I feel we can actually be a positive addition to ATP and work together, because this is what we want.

You know, ATP was talking about everybody being united, and that's exactly what we want. We don't want fragmentation. But we feel, as players, and not just of this generation but a lot of generations in the last 20-plus years, that we just need 100% player association that will represent fully players' rights. And that's all there is to it.

Rafa, I saw him very, very briefly, very quickly, just said hello. We didn't chat about tennis politics or anything like that. And that's not gonna happen during the tournament, for sure.

Maybe there will be time for that next week before Roland Garros when we don't have matches for maybe three, four days, maybe that would be a chance to do it. Thank you.

Q. I imagine there was a special emphasis today on keeping your emotions in check after what happened in New York. Are you pleased with your performance today on the court? Is this a step in the right direction?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes. I mean, look, it was great from the beginning to the end with the way I played, with the way I felt, mentally, physically, as well.

As I said, I had an opponent that is tricky. He's not easy. Obviously he's someone that played three matches already. Clay court specialist. Playing in Italy, he felt he has not much to lose, so he came out on the court playing well.

You know, I had to deserve my win. I had to, you know, step in and take this victory, which I have. As I said, you know, I think I adjusted to this surface pretty nicely in this

six, seven days that I had of play on clay, you know, of practice.

So everything is in check. Everything is the way it's supposed to be.

Q. What went on there at the beginning? I think it was the third game of the second set. You said something to the umpire about maybe somebody in the crowd or something outside of the stadium making a little bit of noise?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It was very, very quiet, which is very unusual to what we are used to here in Rome, which has one of the loudest and most energetic crowd atmospheres on the tour.

But there was somebody in the corridor on the stadium that was talking, about five, six people, I don't know who it was, but it was noise coming from there during the points. That's the only thing that we, I and Caruso, also told chair umpire. That's all.

Q. We don't know who you're going to be play, Cecchinato or Krajinovic, two players you know very well. You haven't faced Marco on the clay since you lost in the French Open. So talking about keeping your emotions in check, would that be a good opportunity to learn from that? Because you were upset from that defeat.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, yes, I was, but, you know, it happened quite a while ago, you know, couple years ago, and obviously a lot has changed since then for both Marco and me.

But if we get to play each other, obviously it will be a very good test for me. Because again, he's a clay court specialist. He's someone that made his best results in his career on this surface and just very, very tricky opponent. He just knows how to play on this surface very well. But I look forward to it. You know, there will be a good chance for me to try to win against him on clay.

On the other side, we have Krajinovic, as well, that is in good form. I haven't played against him since the first time we played in Belgrade, actually, when he was 18, and I retired that match after a set.

So I look forward to that, also. I'm very glad that Filip is doing well with the new coach, Janko Tipsarevic. Filip is someone that I am very close to for many years. I was trying to kind of mentor him in the last seven, eight years, and I'm just very, very pleased that he's doing well.

I just will try to focus on my game. You know, there are things I still need to improve for that next match. As I go along, you know, I hope that things will become better and better.

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