

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Grigor Dimitrov

Press Conference



INTERNAZIONALI
BNL D'ITALIA

BNP PARIBAS

G. DIMITROV/J. Sinner

4-6, 6-4, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You have had wins over the best in the game, and I'm wondering, how important was it for you and the future of the game to have a new US Open champion in Dominic Thiem this year?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: Well, I mean, if there is one person that -- I cannot think of one person that deserves it more than him, to be completely honest. He's been so close on so many occasions, and he was bound to win it. It's just how it is. Whether it's now or, I don't know, the French Open or whatever else, I think it was good. It's new. It's fresh for everyone.

It's intriguing as well in the same time. It helps sort of the younger generation to believe a little bit more. You're going to see a lot of different winners I think overall, different battles and so on.

Yeah, it was definitely bound to happen. It had to happen eventually, right? That was then right now. He absolutely deserved it, and I think it's great for the sport.

Q. For you, here you played Sinner and now you're going to play either Shapovalov or Humbert. Is there any sense that the game is passing by the guys who are 30, in your case 29, because these young guys are coming up so fast?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: Well, I remember when I was at that age, you know, and I never felt like I took it for granted but it was always -- like each one of them are very different, I feel, from one another. Like, for example, when I was 19, 20, or 21, I was this skinny kid that I didn't have enough of my body to be able to compete against the big guys.

Now, all of a sudden you come out and you have these guys, they are 19, 20, 21, they are already so well developed that this already plays a big role in the game.

But I always say tennis is not a sprint. Tennis is a marathon. It's going to be, here and there, you're going to have matches that you're just going to win with experience.

I think in a way that's what happened today. I mean, I know what it is to be 19 years old and you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. You know, you come out and you're so loose in your shots and you make unbelievable plays at the toughest times.

Of course it's not the easiest -- I mean, for example, for the older guys, it's not the easiest sort of way to compete against. For sure, we're gonna have more pressure, but that's what also makes things, why this suits a little bit more for us, because we can lean on the experience and we can kind of go deep down in that zone and be more aware of the situations with whatever situation we need to face.

I mean, I appreciate those matches a lot more and a lot different right now than before. It's going to be more and more like this in the future.

Q. They announced today that they're going to allow in 1,000 fans for the semifinals and finals here at the Foro Italico. Wonder what you think about that announcement coming midway through the tournament? Do you welcome the fans back? Do you think it's fair to the players they announced that midway through the tournament when you're already here? What's your thoughts?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: First time I hear this, to be honest. I don't know how I feel about it. It took me I think a few matches to get used to the fact that we are not having fans around.

Honestly, I don't know what to say. I love having the fans around. Like, this is just how I am. We are also what we are because of the fans. That's just how it is. I mean, I miss them, no doubt about it.

Now, midway through a tournament? I don't know, honestly. I'm really focused on other things right now, just because I have been trying to kind of get my game back a little bit, my mentality back on the courts. I'm so focused on that end that I don't really, you know, think of anything else.

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Clearly I think -- I think we're all going to enjoy it more or less. That's just how it is. Yes, I know it's only, what did you say, 1,000 people? Well, that's (indiscernible) it's something.

Q. 1,000 for the semifinals and final.

GRIGOR DIMITROV: Yeah, I mean, we can't say much on that (smiling).

Q. I just wonder whether there is concern? Maybe some players don't want to go to a tournament where there aren't fans and now they announce it midway through seemed kind of strange to me.

GRIGOR DIMITROV: First time I hear this information. For sure, it comes to me as a bit of surprise like midway through, but, I mean, there is a lot of things that we have control of and some things that we just gotta go along with it. Yeah.

Q. You played with a lot of brain and a lot of humility, playing all those slice shots cleverly. Well, you had lost in Rome last three years, twice in the first round and one in the second round. Have you changed something in your game? You think you won only because of experience, as you said, or other reasons?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: I don't know. Put everything together, I guess. You know, there comes a point that you would expect things to work a little bit for you and for your own, you know, for your own sake, so to speak.

I mean, I think I have enough experience in any tournament to do well. I think sometimes it comes also to a point that you need to find the right settings, as well. I came here quite a few days earlier. I adjusted to the surface a little bit more. I have put some more hours on the court. My body feels better. Mentally I'm a little bit more stronger. Every match gives me a little bit more confidence, so there is a lot to gain from that, to be honest.

I'm really trying to feed off of that energy right now. Of course experience helps me a lot, but, you know, today, for example, the first set things I wanted to do didn't work. Ultimately I had to change, so I started slicing a bit more, right? So I had to kind of alter my game a bit more.

Again, it's not the easiest when you play against a player you have never played against an official match. You know, Jannik, sort of young guy who has nothing to lose, everything to gain. He's loose, hits the ball well. He's playing at home, so to speak.

So there is just a lot of the atmosphere was kind of leaning into something else that I had to do, and I adjusted. So I'm very happy with that. Of course the experience, but in the same time, the game came through as well.

Q. You mentioned that he played loose. In a way sometimes he wasn't that loose, as we have seen him in the past. He was missing a lot of forehands, and your slice was causing a lot of damages. How do you rate his performance? How do you see his future, being honest? Don't say just, Oh, he will become a champion.

GRIGOR DIMITROV: I always say until you don't become a champion, you can't say you're a champion. This is, I would say, one of the biggest mistakes when I was upcoming when everyone was telling me, Oh, you're going to be a champion one day, you're going to be No. 1.

Okay, I never listen to those things. So does he. He should not listen to all of that. He should follow his way.

Yeah, I have noticed a few of his games overall in the past years, even when he played in the NextGen. What I like, he's already a very strong guy, meaning his legs are very strong already for his age. So I feel he can only get better.

I have not played honestly enough against him. I have practiced a few times, and, you know, we always have good practices and he's very stable. He needs to start being consistent. That's just how it is, because, yes, for example, the first set he was playing so loose, I mean, he was making so many deep balls, and, I mean, I was thinking to myself, okay, he's loose, I get it. Like to myself, I get it.

The second set, as soon as he had this break up, I felt mentally I was already ahead of him for some reason, even though I was a break down. I started using my slice a little bit more, and he was trying to overpower -- he tried to overpower me in a sense, that he wanted to kind of blow me off the court, for example.

And this is experience. That's just how it is. However you look at it, it's just experience.

Obviously a break back, I started stepping a little bit more. Even in the third set, again, he started, even though I was 4-1 up, I felt he was a bit tired but yet he kept shooting balls and got the break back like unbelievable. So it was, like, Okay, I cannot say much about it.

But he's yet to develop his game. He has yet to develop his game. I think Riccardo is doing a great job with him. I think time can only tell for him. I think that's just how it is.

He's already playing good on -- I think on hard he's playing really well. Even on clay today I thought it was a very good match on his end.

Q. There has been some debate about reducing men's matches at the slams to best-of-three sets. I'm wondering what your opinion is on that matter. And also, in Paris, Rafa has obviously a great chance to match Roger's 20 slams. Just wondering what do you think the significance of that would be and the impact on his legacy in terms of the way people compare him to Roger?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: I mean, I think, first, I don't think you can compare one person to the other, especially when it comes to those guys' caliber. That's just how it is.

I have always said it, and I will say it, these guys are just, what they have achieved already in tennis, I mean, it's hard to match for anyone, each one on their own.

I think, I hate to say it that way, I'm not sure they really care about those numbers, those guys. They breathe, eat tennis, and that's just the passion of the game. That's just how it is.

I have been lucky enough to spend quite a bit of time with each one of them, just on our own, and it's never about that. It's never about -- yes, a number is a number. I get that point, don't get me wrong. We all want to... yeah.

But for them, I think it's more than that. It's bigger than the game. I think that's what is going on between them three. I mean, who am I to say -- I can only say my opinion on that, but who am I to judge these guys? No chance. I refuse to, and I don't want to.

You can only get the good examples, see their mental state of mind every time they play on a different level, whether it's -- I mean, for me, one of the greatest players clearly are them, and at the beginning of their tournament is probably one of the -- that's why they are the best players, because some of the first matches are one of the most important ones, and they really come through as champions, and they just pick up speed, and then it's very hard to kind of beat them in later stage in the tournament.

Regarding the matches, I would say in the slams, I have always liked the tradition of the game. I wouldn't change that. I like best-of-five. It's fun, it's tough, it's difficult.

I know it's a lot of -- I mean, it's a lot of effort. I understand that part, especially, let's say, on clay. But, you know, I think that's what would also make the game even more interesting.

Plus we have one day off always at slams, so I think you have plenty of time to rest. But of course the game has changed a lot. It's more faster. Players are better, stronger.

There are so many components you can add to it and you can argue with me on that point, as well. But I have always liked the tradition of things.

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