

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

## Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

D. SCHWARTZMAN/N. Djokovic

7-5, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Congratulations. It's a great week. Just wondering how much of a relief it is after what happened in New York and all the criticism you faced there, I'm sure all the mental soul-searching you had to do in the past two weeks after that and to have played so well this week.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, look, you know, as I said on the opening press conference here before the tournament started, I did, you know, experience mentally some kind of ups and downs in the first four or five days after that happened. Obviously I was in shock, as many other people.

But I moved on. Really, I never had an issue in my life to move on from something. Regardless of how difficult it is, you know, I try to, you know, take the next day and hope for the best and move on.

Obviously having a tournament a week after that happened helped a lot, I think, just because I really wanted to get on the court and just get whatever traces of that, if there is any, out of the way.

I think I had a really good week. I don't think I played my best tennis, to be honest. I don't want to sound arrogant here. I'm of course very, very satisfied and pleased and happy to win a title. I know that I still have couple of gears, and hopefully I'll be able to raise that level for French, because that's going to be necessary if I want to go deep in the tournament.

But the positive thing is I thought I served very well throughout the tournament and I found my, let's say, A game when it was most needed in the decisive moments. When I kind of really needed to find a best game, I did.

**Q. Congratulations. A record-breaking win at the Masters, 36 titles which you already have spoken**



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**about on court. I was just wondering, going into the French Open, you've only won one there. What will it take to win a second title? Will it take Rafa not being in the final?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I cannot hope for Rafa not being in the finals (smiling). I can hope for myself being in the final and fighting for the trophy.

I mean, that's probably the player that has the highest chance of being in the final in French Open, and any tournament, for that matter. I mean, if there is one tournament, sorry, if there is one tournament, that's Roland Garros and that's Rafa that you would bet on.

Again, conditions will be different. I think today I experienced something that might be the case in terms of conditions in Paris. A little bit of rain, wet court, clay, you know, not much of a bounce, a bit cold.

That's what I think people have been talking about from the Paris weather standpoint. I'm fine with those conditions. You know, it's going to be interesting obviously seeing how the tournament will progress, I mean, with matches.

There is a lot of matches, and it's of course two-week event with of course quallies three weeks. If it starts raining, and we know at this time in Paris it can rain, how that's going to affect the whole scheduling, you know, and the draw and everything.

You know, we are hoping that we can finish in time, but I have to be physically ready, I think, because, you know, there might be a lot of interruptions. If I don't get to play on center court all the time, which is the only court with roof, obviously I have to be ready that I have to deal with those kind of things, or maybe not playing for a half a day or a day. But I did experience that in the past in Paris already and in London.

But, you know, I feel good. Of course this gives me even more confidence that is absolutely necessary for a Grand Slam.

**Q. You were talking about Rafa at Roland Garros, but, well, he lost this week. You are Rome champion again. Schwartzman is finalist. Who do you think that are the main favorites?**

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NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, as I said, you know, it's Nadal. Even though he lost this week, I still think, you know, a lot of people will agree, he's the No. 1 favorite and, you know, the record that he has there, the history of his results, you just can't put anybody in front of him.

But, you know, definitely Diego showed that Nadal is beatable on clay. The conditions that they played on, obviously heavy clay, not much bounce, humid, night session, we are going to have that, as well, in Paris.

Night session, under the lights, as I said, a little bit less bounce, so I don't know -- you know, I'm pretty sure that he does not prefer that to high bounce. I know he likes the high bounce. He likes the hot and warm and fast conditions where he can use his spin a lot.

So, yeah, let's see. It's going to be interesting. I think even though he's the No. 1 favorite, I think there are players that can win against him there. It's obviously best-of-five, so you've got to be really fit to be able to achieve that.

**Q. Given the extraordinary success that you, Roger, Rafa have had, and then this new generation that's come up, the young guys, Shapovalov, Tsitsipas, Thiem, Zverev, FAA, is there a lost generation in tennis? Are we missing, you know, the guys like Anderson, Isner, Raonic, Dimitrov who never really hit their potential, never won a major? Is there a lost generation in the game?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I think it's really hard for me to say there is a lost generation. I respect the guys that you mentioned, like Dimitrov and Isner and these guys, Anderson. You know, I respect them too much and really think of their tennis highly to group them in the lost generation, if you know what I mean.

But I get your point. I think obviously there has been a lot of discussion about, you know, the big three, the big four and everything we have achieved and taking, you know, 90% of Grand Slams in the last 10, 15 years.

Of course you have guys like Wawrinka that won three slams, and, you know, he deserves to be talked about more but he doesn't maybe as much as maybe three of us or the young guys.

But it's a kind of an expected reaction, I think, from the public and from the media, as well, to divert and focus the attention on the new generation, the younger guys. It's not only the case in tennis. It's the case in all sports. It's normal.

You want to see young guys coming up, doing great things, breaking records, being the youngest whatever that reach top 100, 50 or 10 or winning against No. 1 of the world. We need those stories, as well, for tennis. I think it's great.

And I think it's fantastic that we have that many young, successful, already established successful tennis players on the tour.

But I agree with you. You know, there are guys for sure like Dimitrov that, of course, you can't not say that he hasn't been successful, because he also has been a top-10 player, which is a great success, but I agree that his potential was and still is to be higher ranked than that, to go even further maybe in slams.

But look, you know, the game has changed, as well. You have tall guys likes Zverev, Medvedev serving big, Raonic. It's tough to weather that storm when it's facing you, you know, for some of these guys. Being a top player of the world, top five of the world, it requires a lot of consistency, requires a lot of determination, a lot of sacrifice throughout the year. It's not enough to play one month a year, two months a year well. You have to play the entire year well in order to be one of the best players in the world.

So that's probably the ultimate challenge we have in our sport, to be No. 1 in the longest season in sport.

But, you know, the young guys are showing some great perspective, some great potential. I think mentally and also physically and game-wise they start believing more. I mean, you know, you have new Grand Slam champion, Dominic Thiem, which is fantastic to see also. He deserves it absolutely.

So I think tennis -- I mean, you know, I want to believe tennis is in good hands. I really see a lot of great potential, not just on the court but also off the court, some personalities, Shapovalov, these guys that are interesting and fun guys.

I feel like tennis maybe needs to help these guys express themselves a little bit more and create better brands, I feel like, you know. Because it's obviously everyone wants to win slams and be No. 1 in the world, but I think we have to also focus on expanding the list of brands that we can present to the world in sports.

**Q. I think I remember you saying before that one of the two main goals for you in your career from now on was obviously the Grand Slam titles, surpassing Roger and the amount you won there, and two, the weeks at No. 1. Obviously this is a big week in terms of that,**

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**passing Pete Sampras, 187 weeks. I just wondered, one, how meaningful is that going past someone I guess you looked up to when you were younger, and two, are you taking it so seriously to the point where you know on which date you could potentially go past Roger?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, of course I'm aware of the amount of weeks, and I don't know exactly the date, but I know it's going to be in probably the first or beginning of the second quarter of next year if I eventually maintain my No. 1 ranking.

You know, I'm getting closer. I'm in a very good position, I feel like. I have been also playing really well and been healthy, which is great.

Yes, you're right. Those are the two biggest professional goals that I have at the moment. So the No. 1, historic No. 1 ranking goal is something that is on the horizon, and I'm going to give my all and very best that I can possibly give in the next period to achieve that.

And then, of course, you know, after that -- during, obviously, the attempt to reach that, I'm going to focus on slams mostly but also Masters events, of course. But also, after that, you know, slams will be the big one, of course.

Let's see. I don't know. I can't go too far, and I don't know what years to come will bring for me and just tennis and the world in general...

(Live streaming lost.)

**Q. There is a little chance that the tournament will move from Rome to another Italian city in the future. What's your opinion about that? Would you like to play in another city? You think that Rome is the real...**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I did not know about that, that there is a consideration to move it to the other city. I know that Torino will have the World Tour Finals next year. That's nice. That will be a great change for World Tour Finals, which I have been always saying that the Masters Cup or World Tour Finals should travel more. I don't think it should be in one place more than three years. So that's good news.

But London obviously for World Tour Finals was very successful these last 11 years or as many years that we had it.

And Rome I think is a great place to have the tournament. I mean, you have amazing facilities, history of this tournament, crowd. There is a big, big interest and

popularity of this event. I mean, a lot of people come to watch. Great energy. Great success, to be honest, every year.

I don't know. As I said, you surprise me a little bit, because this is the first time I have this information.

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