

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

## John Millman

Press Conference

M. BERRETTINI/J. Millman

6-4, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Tough match. Things were looking reasonable for you at the early stages of the match, would you agree?**

JOHN MILLMAN: Yeah, look, I started off actually pretty well. Obviously got broken at a pivotal stage at 4-All in the first set, and I know that Matteo is a momentum player. You know, he's a confidence player.

He went through probably a four- or five-game stretch where I thought there wasn't much I could do. He was serving massive. Finding too many forehands. Yeah, just I need to be a little bit better at that 4-All game.

But probably the culmination of a pretty long time on the clay. Body's a little jaded, and I have played enough matches, which I'm happy with, and looking forward to getting to Roland Garros with a few wins under the belt.

**Q. In a weird sense, obviously you want to keep on going in the event and winning matches, but is it good that maybe you're going to get a few extra days of break going into Roland Garros, considering what you just said about being a bit jaded on the clay?**

JOHN MILLMAN: Yeah, look, I'd love to have extended my stay here. You know, over the course of the Masters tournaments, the Masters Series, Monte-Carlo, Madrid and Rome, I feel like I have played some pretty good tennis.

Probably today the assignment is one of the tougher ones. You're playing Berrettini in his home venue on clay. So, look, I will take a lot of positives from this season so far, and looking forward to the Grand Slams and just counting down the months to get home.

**Q. Well done in this tournament, because, I mean, to beat Lajovic who was in the final in Monte-Carlo a few years ago is not bad, no?**



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JOHN MILLMAN: Yeah, just speak a little louder and I'll be able to hear you.

**Q. I'm saying congratulations for beating Lajovic in the first round.**

JOHN MILLMAN: Yes, thank you.

**Q. He's been in the final in Monte-Carlo a few years ago. He's a good clay court player. I'd like you to tell me something about Berrettini. Of course Berrettini played very well in Madrid, but this surface is much slower. For him, it would have been more difficult to adjust, in a way, because with his serve and his forehand, he's capable to win quick points on a faster surface than here.**

JOHN MILLMAN: Yeah, look, I think that the surface though helps him. It helps when you're playing at home, which he is. But also, I think it helps him a little bit. He's obviously got a big enough serve to serve through the slower conditions. It's really hard to find his backhand. You know, he does a really good job of getting on the end of a lot of forehands. Obviously when the conditions are a little bit slower, it's easier for him to find his forehand.

So, look, I think that he's suited here. I think he's competent. He's playing really good tennis right now, and, yeah, I wish him the best for the rest of the tournament.

**Q. Well done on your efforts recently. Can you just give us an idea how you think your clay court game has developed? Are you actually improving at 31?**

JOHN MILLMAN: Yeah, look, you know, I have made it to a final in Budapest, an ATP Tour final on clay, and I have played a lot of club tennis when I had no money. I was not that good at tennis, so I had to play a lot of club tennis in Germany and Switzerland, so I have played a bit on clay, but I am getting better.

I think I have to give credit to my coach. I have been working with Peter Luczak who played a lot of his career on the clay courts. He went to South America a lot, and he's been helping me out.

Yeah, look, I feel as if I'm getting more and more comfortable on the surface. I think for me now the best

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thing is to kind of freshen up going into Roland Garros, because mentally it's a challenge. Being an Australian I think it's probably the toughest thing in tennis right now. We won't go home for 10 months, and that's not the easiest thing.

So I think you've just got to try to stay fresh mentally. Week to week going to tournaments isn't the most -- it is a bit fatiguing. So, yeah, look, if I freshen up I can go right at Roland Garros hopefully, you know, get a bit better.

**Q. What is your ambition there?**

JOHN MILLMAN: Well, first of all, I'm hoping for a good draw. My last five draw first rounds there have been Isner, Shapovalov, Bautista Agut, Alexander Zverev, and Carreno Busta. I think if I could navigate a half decent first round I could probably win some matches, but it's in the hands of the big fellow upstairs and hopefully he can give me a good one.

**Q. A couple of things, what will you do between now and Paris? Will you stay in Rome or will you head to Paris within the next couple of days?**

JOHN MILLMAN: Right now the plan is to head to Lyon actually and try to play there. I will just talk to the coach and see how the back is. My back's been struggling a little bit lately. That's old age for you. It's nothing major, but it has been -- you know, I have been kind of managing it the last two weeks, I would say.

So I think it's all about how I pull up. You know, I'll do a bit of a cooldown now and get some good food into me tonight and wake up tomorrow and then do a bit of a game plan as to how I'll approach and tackle Roland Garros.

But the good thing is I'm playing a lot better on the dirt. You know, I had a bit of a slow start to the season. But I feel as if I'm playing some good stuff now. I would have loved to have done a little bit better today, but that can be clay court tennis sometimes. You can be in games, but if the guy's just playing that little bit better, you know, it can be tough to handle.

You know, I'll take a lot from it and, yeah, get ready for RG.

**Q. You were just saying about counting down the months to getting home. Is it going to be straight after Wimbledon or are you going to stay through till the end of the year like Ash is...**

JOHN MILLMAN: Look, there is lots of bigger things than tennis players abroad, Aussie tennis players abroad. So I don't want it to come across as a bit of a sob story. I have

seen the cricketers pop it a bit (smiling).

For me really it's impossible to come home midseason. You know, I think you do the two weeks' hotel quarantine. It's very expensive, to begin with. But two weeks' hotel quarantine. Probably takes you another couple of weeks to kind of get the body back in order after that, so really you have to take probably, I reckon, about five weeks off.

I don't know if, apart from being injured, I don't know whether I have ever taken five weeks off from, you know, the tournament schedule.

Yeah, look, I knew going away, and probably that's a reflection of probably my poor form to start off the season was when I went away I was probably a bit depressed because I knew that I was going away for like 10 or 11 months. Yeah, look, yeah, I think I was a bit depressed.

Yeah, look, I can't stress the mental side of it, but I'm in a much better place now and kind of have come to terms with a 10-and-a-half month trip.

**Q. How do you battle through? You're struggling, you might have lost an early-round match or something, and then you have to trek from one capital to the other? How do you get through that? Who is getting you through it all?**

JOHN MILLMAN: Yeah, well, it does help when you're winning some matches, I'll tell you. Because when you're losing early on, like really early on, then, I mean, it's terrible, really, especially you can't leave the hotels and all the tennis courts. So it's not the most enjoyable experience.

But, look, the future is bright because I know the ATP have been working hard. Hopefully the bubbles will start to open up a little bit. I think post-Wimbledon it looks maybe a little more optimistic.

But it's when I really have to lean on my girlfriend, who does a lot of travel with me, and my coach. And also, it helps that there is a couple of Aussie lads over here that are -- you know, we really try to, in my opinion, we really try to lift each other up at times, try to watch each other when we're playing. You know, we try to do the hotel dinners together and just throw a bit of banter to kind of get through this trip.

I can't stress how difficult it is to do it. Yeah, ten months is not easy. Yeah, it really isn't.

Look, I lean upon that support. I'm really lucky to have a couple Aussies over here too, and we go week to week

and we try to lift each other up if one of us is down, and, yeah, we just try to make due, mate.

**Q. Who are your big mates, the guys that are keeping you going?**

JOHN MILLMAN: Well, there are a few Aussies that are here that there was a great picture we had in Munich of a couple of us together on the court. Look, I probably lean upon those Aussies guys a little bit more, because we're sharing the same journey and we are experiencing the same feelings.

You know, there is a couple this week, obviously Alex de Minaur, I'm really close with Alex, and then there's Tomo and JP and Mattie Ebden, Luke Saville and Maxie Purcell, Johnny Peers. That's kind of the bunch I would say that are together with the traveling circus from Australia.

Yeah, look, it actually helps. It does help to kind of lean on them. We've just got to get through it in one piece, because, you know we're, yeah, Aussies abroad, we're alone over here and battling through. And hopefully we can go well in the season and kind of finish it with our rankings somewhere intact and live to fight another season when the conditions are a little easier for the Aussies and we can get home.

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