

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

Rafael Nadal

Press Conference

R. NADAL/A. Zverev

6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How different was facing him today a week later?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, yeah, the conditions are different, honestly, no? It's a completely different match here than Madrid. I know. I know it. I have been playing in Madrid for such a long time, and I know how difficult is to control the ball in Madrid, no? Especially against players who serve that well and who are aggressive. Is difficult to be under control, no?

Here situation is a little bit different. Still a very difficult match because he's a fantastic player. He likes to play here. He already won the tournament here.

But, yeah, I was able to play much more solid than last week. I think I did a lot of things well today. I was able to change more the rhythm of the ball on the point. Yeah, have been a positive match for me.

Q. How important is it for you to be able to play the way you have been playing under pressure, saving the match points yesterday against Denis and today 8 for 8 breakpoints saved in the second set against Sascha? Is this what's most pleasing to you about your performance over the last few days?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, is always the same in this sport, no? When you fight, normally you have something back. That's what I did. You know, I fought a lot yesterday. I suffered a lot, but I was able to find a way to win a very complicated match. That gives me the chance to be on court again today.

Today I played much better than yesterday. I did a lot of things well, playing much more solid. So, yeah, I think I played one of the more solid match on clay this year against a very tough opponent.

Yeah, it's a great victory for me. Of course it's important



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because under pressure, under tough moments that sometimes I lost important points last couple of weeks, today, yesterday, before yesterday too, I was able to manage it well, no? To hold well the pressure, to put one more ball in. I think my movements have been improving.

Today was a good day in that. I'm super happy, because after the battle of yesterday, to be able to be on court against a player like Sascha, he had tough match too, but he's more than 10 years younger than me, no? I remember well the feeling on the body when you are younger comparing for today (smiling) and the feeling is completely different, no?

And I was able to be fit, to be ready, and something that give me confidence. So I'm very happy for that.

Q. Heading into Roland Garros after the conditions were so different there last year, how were you able to master the conditions at Roland Garros last year, and then what does it tell you about sort of going back to the sort of normal French Open this year?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, the conditions last year of Roland Garros probably have been the tougher conditions ever for me, for my style of game, but, well, was not bad at all. You know, I played a very good tournament, no? So I think I didn't lose a set (smiling).

I don't know. Things like this sometimes happens, but, yeah, if you tell me, you ask me what I prefer, I prefer play under normal circumstances than last year without a doubt.

Q. After you played Jannik, you said that it's not necessary to have a huge serve to win on this surface, but your next opponent has kind of surprised everyone this week. How do you approach someone like Opelka on clay, especially knowing that you have never faced him before?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, he's a very tough opponent to play. Super difficult. He has huge, huge serve. So I need to be very focused with my serve and try to give myself some chances on the return.

So let's see. Let's see what's going on. I know he has a huge serve and he's able to play aggressive from the baseline too. So I need to play well. That's it, no? Play

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solid, try to put one more ball in and try to make him play one more ball, no?

So let's see. Gonna be a tough one, of course, but semifinals of a Masters 1000, what can you expect?

Q. I know that you don't like too much to look back in your past, but do you know that on the 14th of May of 15 years ago you played Roger Federer here and you saved those two match points. Can you tell us, 15 years later, what are your memories about it? And I still have the shirt that kindly you gave to me for my son.

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, past is past, so it's not good to be thinking about the past all the time, but of course past times, old times have been good and beautiful, and we played some great battles here in Rome, some fantastic battles with Roger.

Yeah, I think we enjoyed, both of us, even if that day was for me. We played some great matches between each other, and this one have been one of the longest that we played.

I think he played a good match. I was lucky in the fifth, but, yeah, good memories. The best thing for me, without a doubt, is 15 years later, still here. Something unexpected for a lot of people, and for me too (smiling).

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