

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Sunday, 16 May 2021

Roma, Italia

## Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

R. NADAL/N. Djokovic

7-5, 1-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Bravo for a great week in Rome. I wanted to ask you about the challenge of facing Rafa on the clay. And for you personally, I know it was a strange situation given that you had five hours on court yesterday, but how much does it mean to actually get the information and to actually face him in terms of you fine-tuning your game on the clay ahead of Roland Garros?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I was happy to play him because of the fine-tuning for Roland Garros, as you mentioned in the end of your question, for sure. That doesn't get bigger of a challenge on clay than playing Rafa in finals.

I could have easily went out from this tournament in quarters. I'm very pleased with my fighting spirit. The level of tennis was higher and higher, actually.

Yesterday I played great. Today I thought I also played a high level. Unfortunately decisive moments in the first and third set, you know, just went his way. It was a bit unfortunate.

Didn't capitalize on that breakpoint in 2-All. Next game I played against the wind with used balls. Just tough, you know, to play him from that side. Next game, 4-2, and he broke my serve. He got new balls. So that helps his serve.

Yeah, just was a bit unfortunate in those moments, but overall almost three hours of high-quality tennis. Of course I'm disappointed not to win it, but at the same time I'm very pleased with the level of tennis that I managed to find in the later stages of this tournament.

Going into Paris brings me good sensation. I actually now started to feel like I actually want to feel on clay. So I think if I manage to play the way I played last night and today, I think I have a good chance to go all the way in Paris. Of



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course it's a long shot, but I'm gonna play, you know, a tournament in Belgrade the week before French Open, so that's going to give me another set of matches. Don't know how many but hopefully can have a few coming into Paris ready to rock 'n roll.

**Q. You sort of alluded to your fighting spirit. As you said, you are disappointed that you lost. But how important is it for you mentally to sort of show yourself like how hard you fought throughout this event to end up pushing into the final and pushing Rafa to three?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, mentally it means a lot to overcome, you know, huge obstacle against Tsitsipas. I was set and a break down. He was serving for the match. You know, he had everything to finish that match, like probably Shapovalov had everything to finish the match against Rafa in, was it quarters, as well?

So we both dig ourselves out of quite a big hole and managed to reach finals. Yeah, he was just better player in the decisive moments, and he took the victory away from me, but was very close. I have a lot of positives to take away from today.

**Q. Your fighting qualities are always a give. It's expected. But if you had to adjust anything or is there anything you need to adjust or fine-tune going into Paris, what would that be? This coming week before you play Belgrade, what will you do?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, this coming week I'm going to rest as much as I can, because I had enough time with the racquet on the court. So I'm just going to rejuvenate, regroup, and then start training again some days before the start of the Belgrade Open.

I'm hoping I can go all the way there, playing at home, most likely we are going to see the crowd in the stands, so that's going to be fantastic to kind of feed off that energy, to go to Paris with good feelings on the court, off the court, spend some time with the family additionally which I wouldn't get if I go earlier to Paris.

Yeah, I'm looking forward. You know, I have to obviously keep the momentum going I feel with the quality of tennis. Do more training, of course, and some few more matches. I think I'm on the right way.

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Actually, last couple days really gave me the confidence boost for the clay. I found the game. So now I just have to maintain it, that level, and peak in Paris.

**Q. How much of a factor was fatigue end of the third set after being on court for nearly five hours yesterday? You had to have felt that in the legs.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Not at all. I did not feel any fatigue. So he managed to break my serve and played better. That's it. As I said, till the last shot it was quite close. I had my shot to win it, but wasn't meant to be.

I didn't feel fatigue. Actually, I was very happy with the way I felt on the court. I could have gone for another few hours. I didn't have an issue physically.

**Q. Regarding your joke in the speech, I was wondering, do you ever get bored of hearing next gen this, next gen that?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah. That's the reason why I answered the way I answered. (Smiling.)

I mean, I said it thousand times. I don't know how many times people want me to repeat it. Of course the next gen is there, is coming, whatever. But here we are still winning the biggest tournaments and slams. I don't know what to tell you other than that.

I'm not focused on the next gen even though I know people, you know, it creates a story. People like to talk about it. Fine. The guys are there. They are already establishing themselves in the top 5, top 10 of the world. Nothing new. But we are still there.

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