

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

Ons Jabeur

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on your run in Madrid. How does it feel to be here in Rome as a WTA 1000 champion?

ONS JABEUR: Really amazing to be here. I love Italy. I love everything about Italy here. I'm just going to try to do the same thing I did in Madrid. I came with the same press conference outfit, so it's a start (smiling).

But great to be back here and hopefully I'm just going to focus on recover well for my first match and be ready.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Have you had time to reflect, to let it sink in? Has it sank in yet, Madrid, or are you already in Rome mode? Can you celebrate?

ONS JABEUR: Well, I mean, yeah, after the final I had to be with you guys, enjoy my time with you, to be honest. Then, yeah, Karim had to pack, so it was it was his obligation to pack for me.

We had a little bit celebration with Karim yesterday. We took our time, but we want to move on in the same time because we are here in Rome, not a lot of time to recover.

Pretty happy. I'm still digesting, to be honest with you. It's amazing. I just don't want to be overwhelmed with the trophy but at the same time try to enjoy. I have to be ready for tomorrow. You know, let's see.

Q. You are one of the most well-liked players on tour. What has it been like to walk the grounds as the champion? Have people been giving you shtick or hugs?

ONS JABEUR: I had a lot of hugs from yesterday until today. It's great to see all the players happy for me. Honestly I'm just really overwhelmed. I got a lot of hugs, I got to tell you, a lot of hugs. I love hugs. It's amazing (smiling). Great energy. People were really happy for me. That's amazing.

I really hope to continue in this level, like I said. I like all



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players. I respect all players. It's amazing to see that everybody is trying to push the other to do better. To be part of that, I'm really proud of it.

Q. I also saw the reaction from the Arab world has been quite big. All of the celebrities, they posted about you multiple times. I know you know some of the them personally, maybe some not. What was your reaction to all of the reaction to your win?

ONS JABEUR: I was like, What? I think Rheem knows better that the Michael Jackson of the Arab world kind of texted me. It's amazing to see Ragheb texting me. It's a great honor for me.

For those who don't know actually, somebody really special texted me. The famous wrapper Ghali, who is also Italian, Tunisian-Italian, that I love so much. I love his work, his songs. He texted me. He was really proud. It's amazing. Maybe I hope to see him here in Italy.

Q. You have a beautiful game, a lot of skills, slice, dropshots. Who learned you to play in this such way?

ONS JABEUR: Well, I think I just started to play like this from the young age. Thanks to my coach who kind of gave me the freedom from the young age to play however I wanted. I think that game reflects really well with my personality, the fact that I don't like routine much, the fact that I like to change it up a little bit. I also like to make my opponents suffer, so it's a great thing (smiling).

I like the beautiful game. If I'm enjoying and playing well, that's when I play the best.

Q. I know you said you're still digesting it. Tennis is a bit tough because it's so back to back; you don't have time to let things sink in. How are you going to manage that: appreciate what you've done while also keeping your focus for Rome and Roland Garros?

ONS JABEUR: Well, I know in my head that the main goal is really the French Open, to be ready for that. I'd like to know how to manage the back-to-back weeks from Madrid to Rome. I know great players, great champions, great legends, they do it. It's another challenge for me as well right now, is to know how to handle that three weeks. To be able to be ready physically for it, mentally for it, it's



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another challenge for me.

I hope I can really dig deep in this one again because if I learn how to manage these two tournaments, I may be able to be even more ready to win a Grand Slam, you know?

It's part of my journey. It's part of the challenge to understand how this is working. You know, I'm just still learning right now. I hope this tournament will start really well for me.

Q. Talking about the building blocks to winning a slam, listening to you talk you say, This is what I have to do to get to that. Did Madrid feel like one building block or did it feel like a bunch of building blocks that you were able to put together towards getting to your goal?

ONS JABEUR: Maybe both at the same time because for me the journey was to take it a step at a time, to understand how to win against certain players, to get more the experience of it.

Yeah, obviously Madrid did give me a huge step and give me a lot of confidence, kind of nominated me to be one of the favorites to win a Grand Slam. It's a new thing for me. To hear people talking about it, it's amazing. I always believed that I can win a Grand Slam, but people again putting me in their predictions, I don't know what's going on there (smiling).

It's a great step for me, but I'm going to keep doing the same, keep moving on, maybe slowly, maybe fast, I don't know. My main goal is to really be able to win a Grand Slam this year.

Q. What has been harder for you in your career, to convince yourself that you can do this or to convince other people?

ONS JABEUR: To be honest with you, I had to learn not to convince other people but to convince myself. The fact that you give so much importance to what people think is a waste of energy, a waste of time. I've learned the hard way and also the good way.

I had it in my, you know, that I had to believe more in myself. It's tough sometimes to block that negative energy that people say you cannot do it, you cannot do it. Kind of hearing that from a young age, it was tough to get past it.

Starting from juniors when I got injured, when I had surgery with my wrist like this, I said, I want to win the French Open. You can see most of the journalists laughing at you,

it was tough.

I think for me, I learned how to believe even more in myself, how to block that negative energy. Learning from trusting yourself, you really arrive at a certain point where you don't care what others think because they don't really know how you are living your life from waking up till going to sleep, what are you struggling with, crying under the shower, crying most of the time after losing, disappointing yourself. People don't know what's happening.

I wish they can take the time and appreciate that, not just for me but for all other athletes in the world.

I have to change now. Grazie mille.

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