

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Monday, 9 May 2022

Roma, Italia

## Rafael Nadal

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Any questions?

RAFAEL NADAL: Hello. How are you? Ciao.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Carlos, what you made of how he finished the tournament, from quarterfinals onwards beating players like yourself, Novak, Alex. What was your reaction to that?**

RAFAEL NADAL: No reaction. Nothing new in my opinion, no? He already won in Miami, won in Barcelona. Honestly is not a big surprise. Happy for him.

Everybody knows the amount of confidence he has right now, the level that he can reach. So, yeah, happy for him. Happy because we have an amazing player in our country for a lot of years to come.

It's always special to win at home. Have been probably very special week for him.

**Q. How are you feeling with your own preparation? Obviously not the full schedule of clay tournaments you usually have. After one event, a few matches in Madrid, how are you feeling about your progress right now?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I need to keep improving, being honest, no? I think is a little bit different situation. For example, in 2020 I played here, only here, then in Roland Garros. Is true that I was not able to play much. At the same time I was practicing.

This time is completely different, no? I have been for one month and a half without being able to practice, so I know what's going on.

Is different coming back from injuries with a new season than starting a new season than in the middle of the season. Normally when you start in the new season, you come back after an injury but you have some period of time to prepare yourself. Then, of course, you need to recover the confidence, the level of your tennis competing.

In that case a little bit different because immediately that I



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was able to play, I come back to a tournament, so the transition is much faster. So it's normal that I need some more time in terms of everything, in terms of movement, in terms of being more fitter, in terms of reading again the game.

In general terms, have not been a negative week in Madrid, even if the tournament is probably the most difficult for me, for the altitude and all this stuff.

Excited to be in Rome. It's a place that I love so much. Amazing memories. I'll try my best, as I do always. I hope to be ready to play a little bit better than last week. Let's see.

**Q. Roland Garros will be the first Grand Slam in a full year with both you and Novak Djokovic. What is the significance for you, for the tournament and the sport as a whole?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Not much I think. I think tennis is much more important than Novak and myself. And there is plenty of players out there that can fight for the big titles, no?

I mean, probably is not like five or 10 years ago that probably even if always have been chances for all the players, is true that arrive a moment that, years ago, look like the tournament always have been between four players, then between three, the chances of victory.

I think today the situation is different. If somebody is not playing, of course, I think for the fans and the sport is better if I am playing, if Roger is playing or if Novak is playing - saying from humble position - but at the same time we are part of the history of our sport. Is good that the best players in any sport are on court.

But the situation change, is changing. We are getting old, too. New generations are coming strong. But, of course, Roland Garros will be such an important event. But I think there is a lot of candidates.

**Q. I hope you don't get annoyed about too many questions about Alcaraz because now everybody is talking about him all the time, for what he does. I would like to know if you remember what happened to you when you started to make all the big results, you**



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were so young, newcomer. There was Federer older and so on. Do you see any difference 20 or so years later? Do you see any difference about what was going to happen to you and what is happening to him?

RAFAEL NADAL: I don't understand. First thing, I answered the first part: I will not be never annoying about answering questions about colleague of mine.

**Q. The second is about if there is a difference between the media, the pressure, the audience who are paying attention to you 17 years ago, and now for Alcaraz, is more or less the same or something has changed? The coverage of the media, for instance, is not the same. Now there is more social which was not existing at the time.**

RAFAEL NADAL: That's your job. Is not my job to analyze that.

I don't remember. Unfortunately have been long time ago since I was 18 or 19. I can't complain at all the way that the media and the people treat me during all my tennis career.

The way that Carlos will be treated I think will depends on how much he will achieve and how good he will be with the people in his tennis career, no, with the fans, the media, the way that he treats people. Normally you will receive what you give. I think Carlos is a good guy. Is normal that he's receiving a lot of attention.

First thing: he is young, he is new, and all the new things are much more interesting than older things, without a doubt. When you see a new car, always looks better. When you see a new phone, always looks better than the old one. It's something that it's normal in this life. I can't complain at all about that.

At the same time I happy to have somebody like him from my country achieving all the things that he's achieving. That's all.

**Q. At this stage of your career, the biggest challenge you are doing now is with your body, with your tennis, with young people, with history? Which is the more exciting thing?**

RAFAEL NADAL: I like what I do, honestly, no? I am not playing anymore for things outside of my happiness and for things outside of my personal motivation. I am happy doing what I am doing. I still feel myself competitive when I am healthy enough.

Of course, at my age, when you start having more

problems than what you can manage, of course is tough without a doubt, no? Body issues, pains, you can manage that. The problem is when you start to feel that with all the things that's going through your body, you can't be competitive enough to fight for the things that really keep exciting you, no? That happens, then is another conversation. That is the moment to probably make decisions.

But, I mean, for the moment I am happy. Is true that I went through - again - tough period of time. That haven't been easy for me, being honest.

But I am here. I am here to enjoy and to give myself a chance to play well here in Rome, and of course to try to be ready for Roland Garros in a couple of weeks, no?

I am happy the way I started the year. For me have been amazing. What happened in the last two months, yes, but in the other hand I have probably the best start of a season in my tennis career at my age.

I mean, is always put everything in perspective, put everything on a balance, and the positive things are much heavier than the negative things in my life, without a doubt. Will not be fair enough to complain about the things that are happening to me.

**Q. You had such a great start to the year, through Indian Wells, before this injury. How much of that momentum and confidence from the success early on do you feel like you still retain or how much do you have to build back from zero after the injury?**

RAFAEL NADAL: No, when you are six weeks without touching a racquet and without having the chance to move your body... My body is like an old machine. To put this machine on again it already again takes some time. Is not the same when you have 19 than when you have almost 36, with all the issues that I went through in my tennis career, no?

You need to build again the confidence on your body, on your movements, then you going to start feeling again comfortable with your tennis, no?

It's more about being confident with my movements, recover the speed, recover the way that I have to play on clay and let's see.

I am confident that I can play well honestly, no? I need some time, but maybe this week can be a positive week, maybe not. Who knows? The only thing that is sure, I going to keep trying and I going to keep building confidence to try to be ready for next week, for in two

weeks. That's my goal unfortunately this year because I didn't have another chance to approach this clay court season with all the things that I went through.

That's it. I going to give myself a chance and then we'll see what's going on.

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