

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Casper Ruud

Press Conference



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C. RUUD/J. Brooksby

6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: First question.

Q. Tomorrow you might play for the first time Rafa. What are your plans to be able to beat him?

CASPER RUUD: Well, I've seen him on TV all my life. I think in a way I know his game better than any other player. To play him is something different. It's always a challenge, especially on clay. I think it's one of the toughest challenges we have in this sport, to play against him on clay.

I will just try to enjoy the moment and let's see if my game plan can work. At least I have practiced with him sometimes before. I know a little bit what to expect. I hope I can deliver a good match.

Q. I receive quite often calls from Norway, Norwegian colleagues. You're becoming more and more popular. How popular are you in your country right now in comparison with the famous cross-country skiers and other skiers? Are you always in the magazine, front cover? You have people chasing you to ask you autographs?

CASPER RUUD: Well, I'm not being chased when I walk around in the city, so that's a nice thing I guess. We have other athletes that are more famous like Haaland, the football player, who is probably the biggest sports star in Norway at the moment. You have, yeah, some other big names like Karsten Warholm, who won the Olympic gold in 400 meter hurdles. Ingebrigtsen, who also won Olympic gold, 1500 meters.

It's fun because it's a big group of athletes from Norway that are doing quite well in the big international summer sports. It's not often we will get to experience this.

When it comes to me personally, I haven't felt too much of this star feeling. Sometimes when I go to the grocery store, people will say, I think I've seen you before.

I say, Well, depends if you watch tennis or not.

Some of them are recognizing me. They just wish me luck, tell me to keep going. It's just nice. It's not a big issue at all.

Q. Do you know about more children playing tennis than before? Do you see more tennis on TV?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, first of all, Eurosport in Norway, they have done a good job because they have bought a lot of the licenses for the tournaments, so it's easy in a way to follow me from Norway. The sport is growing a little bit I think.

Also because 2020 when COVID came, everyone had to stay home. Everyone wanted to do something in the summer. Many people, they chose to either try for the first time or pick up the tennis racquet again. Also the same with golf. Tennis and golf in Norway has been getting a lot of new members, becoming more popular.

If this is because of me, I don't know. I guess maybe a little bit. I hope it can continue to grow and that we can have more, of course, members around in the country but also hopefully in the future more players that can decide to try to play professional.

Q. A few days ago you had a practice with Djokovic. How much can this help you in matches you have against them? Was Goran teasing you or your team, did he mention at any point his head-to-head with your father?

CASPER RUUD: Well, no. My father and Goran, they didn't talk about this today. I know that they are sometimes joking a little bit around because they played each other a couple of times.

I think my father lost the toughest loss in his career against Goran in Australian Open, I don't know which year, but it was fourth round. My father was Love-40 in the fifth set, I think it was 3-All in the fifth set, Love-40 on the serve of Goran. He did four aces in a row, won another very good serve. It was very close to win this match. Eventually he lost 6-3 or 6-4. It was the biggest match of my father's career and he lost. I'm sure when he sees Goran, he will

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always remember this.

Yeah, I mean, Novak and Rafa, they play a bit different when it comes to their play style. It's always fun and nice to play with the biggest stars. It's a little bit different than just practicing with any other player. You are more sharp and more on top of your game.

I think it might hopefully help me a little bit coming into tomorrow if I have to play against Rafa.

Q. You earned the title in the last year of clay specialist. Are you worried or motivated by Alcaraz in the last period? The second question is, are you just ready to win Roland Garros this year?

CASPER RUUD: Well, I mean, I'm not going to say that I'm worried by Alcaraz because I think we should all just appreciate how good he is. He is a rare talent that we have all been talking about for already some time now, and he's still so young. I mean, he's been one of the best players of the world this year. Let's see if he can keep it going.

Everything is also new for him. I guess at some point everyone will face challenges in their career. It will be interesting to see how it goes for the rest of the year because the pressure will be different for him now, people will know him a little bit more.

I'm not going to sit here and talk about the rest of his career. But it's motivating to see that a young player can do big results like this. Of course, I lost to him two times. Of course, I wish to have my revenge someday. Hopefully we can play more big matches.

My biggest match of my career I played against him, he was able to win. Like I said, I hope I can have my revenge someday.

Yeah, I mean, I think we all just wish him luck for his career, but we always want to beat each other when we play against each other.

Q. Do you expect an excellent result in hard court this year?

CASPER RUUD: If I expect what?

Q. The good result that you have in hard court this year, did you expect it?

CASPER RUUD: Oh, if I expect it.

Maybe not. If I had to guess if I was ever going to reach a

final in ATP 1000, I would not guess Miami Open. When I came to Miami I said early in the beginning of the week, the tournament, I think the conditions suited me quite well. It was quite high bounce. I felt comfortable from the first practice on the court.

Of course, sometimes you need a little bit luck with the draw here and there, who you play. Sometimes you can have tough match already in the first matches. Other times you can have a good draw which can lead you all the way to the final.

Of course, everything went a bit my way in Miami. I said also that I wanted to finish the hard court season in a good way, in Miami. Luckily I was able to do so.

Q. You've trained a lot at Nadal's academy. How much of his philosophy or spirit do you feel you got from being in that place, in the environment that's very much his?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I mean, I try to learn from him every time I get to practice with him. On the court and off the court I think he's a very good example of how an athlete should behave, the values he has.

I've got to know him a little bit more when I'm in the academy. He's not inviting me over for dinner every time I'm there. He has his life, he has his things to worry about.

Yeah, it's always fun to be there. It's motivating to be around him because you're talking about a guy who has won everything there is to win and still plays today like it's the first time he's playing on the center court.

It's just incredible to see how he's been able to keep the motivation and the intensity for already so many years.

Q. Have you seen Norway's Eurovision entry?

CASPER RUUD: Norway, this year?

Q. You haven't seen the wolves and the banana?

CASPER RUUD: No, I haven't. I watched the last time we won with Alexander Rybak. After this year we haven't had any chances to win, I guess.

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