

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

Ons Jabeur

Press Conference

O. JABEUR/M. Sakkari

1-6, 7-5, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Ons, strong recovery after the first set.

ONS JABEUR: And the second set (laughter). Honestly, I need to find solution with my eyes. It's very, very tough. The shade did bother me a lot at the beginning. I couldn't find my rhythm.

In my head at 5-2 I said, You cannot finish those two weeks, those amazing almost three weeks, like this. That's what got me started. I'm very happy that I could get the win at the end.

Q. Did the confidence you had in Madrid and the first days here help you to win the match?

ONS JABEUR: Every match. Like I said, I definitely didn't want to finish what I did those three weeks like that. I think it will help me a lot.

I wasn't that stressed but I was struggling with starting the match and playing my game. It's not easy to play Maria, no? I know she hits really hard. I couldn't find my rhythm at the beginning. But I'm glad with a little bit experience that I have, I could pull off the win.

Today the match for me was mentally more than anything else. Physically I felt good. The fact that I have the confidence, I think that gave me the opportunity to win today.

Q. There was a lot of Egyptian or Tunisian in the public. What do you represent? For the first time here just to see you. What do you represent for the Arabic world, women especially?

ONS JABEUR: I'm not sure about the Egyptians, but for sure I saw a lot of Tunisians there (smiling).

Yeah, the Arab community was pretty, like, present today. They did help me a lot. I also cannot forget the Italians.



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There is a guy behind me is like, Dai, Ons, don't worry. Dai, dai. He was behind me. It was really nice to see that support. Some other guy told me to wake up, which was the right word, to be honest with you, at 5-2.

That gives me a lot of confidence, especially to represent the Arab community. Hopefully I can continue on this level.

Q. You said you were hoping to make the semifinals here; that would be a good week for you in Rome. You've done it.

ONS JABEUR: Did I say semi? I didn't say finals? I change my answer (smiling).

Q. What does it mean for you to be able to back up Madrid the way that you have, especially maybe not playing your best level throughout the week, to still make another 1000 semi?

ONS JABEUR: Honestly I feel like I was playing better the other matches. Maybe today wasn't the best. Probably another test for me mentally, for sure.

But to back up the performance from Madrid, it's very important for me. Like I said, it's one of the reasons why I'm here, why I want to continue showing myself on the court.

It's part of maybe the journey. I told you I want to win a Grand Slam, so maybe I have to go through this to be able to win one Grand Slam. For now I'm doing it right. Different test from each match. Hopefully I can still continue.

Only two matches left. I want to give more than 100% and hopefully I will be ready.

Q. I remember you were coached by Luca Pino when you were very, very young.

ONS JABEUR: I'm still young, though (smiling).

Q. You never learnt any Italian talking with him, apart from dai, dai, some other words? Are you still in touch sometimes with him? He was sure that you would become a great champion. At that time it wasn't easy to predict it.

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ONS JABEUR: Yeah, I mean, I love Italian. I loved working with Luca. It was great. We won the French Open together in 2011. He's an amazing guy. He helped me a lot with my career.

I mean, I was just in juniors back then. I think at the time he wrote a book about Rafael Nadal. I mean, it's nice that he shared the experience with me.

He did teach me another few words, but unfortunately he was talking a lot in French with me. But it was really great working with him. I have great memory. We speak from time to time on Facebook. I saw him I think a few years back.

But, yeah, I still have great memories from Luca.

Q. What exactly is your relationship with clay? Obviously you won junior French Open, had your French Open breakthrough. There's grass, which you like a lot. Your hard court game has improved. It's taken you more time on the senior level to make the success you've had on clay. How do you describe it?

ONS JABEUR: Only love for clay, for sure.

Well, like I said before, I grew up playing a lot on clay. I only knew the Roland Garros before as a Grand Slam. For me the other ones didn't exist.

I mean, I just love the fact that I maybe have more time on clay, the fact that I can play my game, do my shots, the dropshot, everything, the dirt.

It's fun to play on clay. You always have the chance to recover no matter what. Even if you're behind a hundred meters, you can always come back and win the point.

Yeah, grass for me, like I said, there is a great relationship between football and grass. When I wear the shoes, the grass shoes, I feel like I'm going there to play a football match, which is a sport I love so much. That's why I play really well on grass.

But, yeah, it's tough to decide. But either Grand Slam, I take it (smiling).

Q. Either Dasha or Jil. Talk through both of those matchups, what the challenges are.

ONS JABEUR: Well, again, I hope they play for six hours (smiling).

I mean, Jil had an amazing run in Madrid. I know she

loves playing on clay. It's going to be very tough. Not only she has like a clay court game, and a lefty, so it's going to be very tiring.

Dash, never easy to play Dash, even though I know I won the last few matches before. She's such a fighter. I love her. I love her team. They're doing incredible work.

It's going to be probably a great match, great opportunity for me to get to the finals. I'm just going to give it all and let's see what's going to happen.

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