

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Sunday, 15 May 2022

Roma, Italia

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

N. DJOKOVIC/S. Tsitsipas

6-0, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Obviously going back to Australia, you mentioned in a couple of interviews, how interesting is it for you this whole path? How difficult has it been? Would you have expected to make the transition so...

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: To some extent it's a relief because after everything that happened at the beginning of the year, was important for me to win a big title, especially with Grand Slams coming up where obviously I want to play my best and be at the level of confidence I think more than just the game, where I want to be in order to have a chance to win the title.

Rome historically has always been a place where I felt down a little bit or didn't have as good of results. I always kind of found my groove here because of the support, because of an amazing energy the crowd gives on and off the court.

Yeah, I couldn't ask for a better week really. Played a perfect set today. Didn't drop a set the whole tournament. I trusted the process really when I started training on clay.

I knew that even though I did not have tournaments prior to Monte-Carlo, I still felt rusty on the court. I knew I'm kind of player, particularly on clay, that needs more time, at least three, four weeks to get to the desired level. Historically that's always been the case.

I usually peak here in Rome. I've had six titles but also had a lot of finals, semifinals. Always a really good week of tennis with a lot of matches, competitiveness on the court.

Anything that I was really looking for here in Rome I got. It's the perfect kind of preparation and lead-up to Roland Garros.

Q. You've had such a great week here. Could you analyze how much you've raised your level from the



INTERNAZIONALI
BNL D'ITALIA

BNP PARIBAS

loss to Carlos last week to now? Is there a way to quantify it? How would you explain it?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I thought I had really good performances in Madrid, as well. That was a close, close match. He deserved to win, but it was really one point that decided the winner. I was satisfied with the level that I was playing at. I knew coming here into Rome that I just needed to follow the trajectory and the process, and it will eventually come, the title.

I liked my chances here really with the way I was feeling on the court. In the practice sessions, I was really striking the ball cleanly.

Yeah, I could not ask for a better lead-up to Roland Garros really. Serbian Open finals, really working my way through the tournament physically. Then Madrid, better performances, but still maybe not as sharp in those decisive moments. And here everything kind of came together and clicked.

I'm going to Paris with definitely confidence and good feelings about my chances there.

Q. How do you rate your chances in Roland Garros? You seemed to just answer that question.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I mean, I think with rankings and the way I've been playing in the last few weeks, I would rate myself as one of the favorites. I don't obviously spend too much time thinking who's going to win it or who might have the best chance. I always think about myself.

I go there with the highest ambitions, particularly of the way I played here. I really like my chances. Obviously the draw and everything, it's not something that you can affect, but it's going to also determine a little bit of my trajectory to the later stages of the event.

Best-of-five, you play every second day. It's a Grand Slam. It's different. Really, the Grand Slams are played differently. You have to approach it differently.

But the way I've been feeling on the court and off the court in the last few weeks, I really think I can go far.

Q. After the Serbia final, you said you hadn't been



... when all is said, we're done.®

feeling good physically. What was your physical state and improvement? Do you feel playing your first best-of-five of the year in Paris, you're feeling ready for that challenge?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I think physically I really felt really good from Madrid onwards. Already there I felt like the physical issues that I was facing in Monte-Carlo and Serbia are behind me. I put in a lot of fitness hours between Serbia and Madrid. I had a week of training.

I knew that it wasn't something related to my fitness, it was more related to the health issue, the illness I had just before the Monte-Carlo tournament. It turned out to be correct. I didn't have any fitness issues. It was just those traces of the illness that I had.

Right now I feel perfect.

Q. Did you feel it could take more longer after what happened in Melbourne? Do you think it will make you stronger?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I always try to use these kind of situations and adversity in my favor to fuel me for the next challenge. I mentally think about what's coming next and turning the next page.

Obviously moving on I have to think positively about this in a way that I'll use that as a great experience, I guess, in life, and hopefully becoming stronger from that.

It's something that I never faced before, so that amount of pressure and everything that I was feeling in the first few months of the year, as much as I've felt pressure in my life and my career, that was something really on a whole different level.

But I feel it's already behind me. I feel great on the court. Mentally as well. I'm fresh. I'm sharp. Yeah, it's just something that happened in the past.

Q. I don't know if it's true, but it's been said that the only thing that's more mentally challenging than being a tennis player is being a tennis parent. What are your thoughts or your philosophy as you embark on this journey?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, the journey started successful. My son won the tournament today. I just received that news. A sunshine double today. It's a very small club tournament. Obviously it doesn't really matter. The result is secondary. It was nice to see him playing.

Obviously we had a chat last few days about the routines

and the things he should do before the match. I was kind of leading him into this world. It was interesting to see how he responds to that. Obviously you have to speak in their language about things that I feel like it could help him.

The first official tournament or match always stays in your memory very fondly. I really wanted him to enjoy it on the court. Shortly that we spoken, he was on the Cloud 9 with all the family, my parents, my wife's parents, everybody there supporting him. It's nice.

I'm not forcing him to play tennis. I never did that. Not a single day have I told him you have to do this. It's really purely his own desire to step on the court.

If he wants to embark on this journey, I guess I have to embark with him, too. Of course, I'll be thrilled if he plays tennis.

Look, he's only seven. I mean, he's still a child, he's so young. He shouldn't feel any of the pressure or expectations yet, even though he's going to because it's part of I guess his family. He's going to attract a lot of attention if he's playing tennis, particularly in our country.

He's doing well so far. He's really in love with the sport. Last night when I spoke to him, he was up till late. He was showing me forehands and backhands, how he's going to move tomorrow, kind of shadowing, playing shadow tennis, without racquet. It was so funny to see that. I used to do that when I was a kid. I could see the joy in him, the pure emotion and love for the game. That's 99.9% of children when they start to play tennis or any sport is because they fall in love with it.

I have to remind myself, I have privilege to be father of wonderful kids. I try to take that energy, childish energy, and fuel my inner child because I tend to forget about my inner child a lot. Everything is so serious. It's your profession. It's your job. You got to be this. You got to be that. You got to be disciplined. Sometimes we take life too serious. They remind me of that connection, that pure energy.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports