

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Friday, 12 May 2023

Roma, Italia

## Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

N. DJOKOVIC/T. Etcheverry

7-6, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

### Q. Basically talk about your feeling for the match.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I thought I played well in the second set. I closed out the match really well. First set I had a slow start. Kind of a story of my clay court season so far. I have really slow starts.

I haven't had too many matches and too many wins on this surface. Still finding the groove. Won against a really solid player, someone that is a specialist for clay. He's up-and-coming young player.

Obviously always tricky to play somebody first time. Particularly at the beginning of the match you need to feel his pace of the ball, spin, how he moves. It's different watching him play in a video, trying to get yourself ready tactically for that, then of course for the match, coming into the court and actually playing.

But I was pleased the way I fought. I think the first set went 1:15, very long exchanges. It was good quality tennis. I'm pleased with the win.

### Q. You put back the sleeve at the beginning of the match. Was it because of the conditions or...

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It was quite cold. I was not playing with it these days. 17, 18 degrees, felt really cold. Sometimes that affects the way I feel with my elbow and everything. I just wanted to put the sleeve to feel that it's warmed up, I guess, that it feels more comfortable for me.

**Q. I was watching the recent Boris Becker documentary. I heard him describe how sometimes he would get himself into difficult situations in a match that maybe wasn't necessary to get into, but he would use it as a way to test his mental strength to get out of those situations. I don't know if this is making sense. Do you recognize that thought pattern, getting yourself**



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### into a hole or difficult situation as a test?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Boris is a dear friend, of course my former coach. I've had amazing success in my career with him in my box as a coach. He's one of the mentally strongest people I know.

Considering what he was going through in the last couple of years, coming out still walking tall and proudly, it's something that I admire. We all try to navigate through life in the best possible way. We all make mistakes.

He's someone that he's so respected by the tennis community and just sports world in general. One of the most famous German athletes of all time, somebody that really revolutionized the tennis as well. In Europe, worldwide as well. He was No. 1 in the world.

As I said, a great friend and dear person to me in my life. I wish him all the best. I can't wait to see him. I didn't see him in the last few months since he's out. Hopefully soon in Paris get a chance to meet with him.

I see he's doing some talks, sharing his story. I'm sure that a lot of people can get inspired and learn from what he has to say. He sincerely is so open in sharing that, showing who he is, a very, very honest person.

### Q. Can you tell us something about your rendezvous with Jose Mourinho.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Rendezvous.

### Q. Did you meet him?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, I met him more than few times in the past. He was coming to watch me play in London, especially in the World Tour Finals. We had a tournament there for many years. He was coaching in London. He was coming to watch.

He's an avid tennis fan, of course one of the greatest football coaches that we have not just today but in history. I'm really honored that he's coming to watch my matches. I really appreciate that. Very, very nice person. Always was very kind to me and my team.

Yeah, hopefully I can return the favor and go watch his



... when all is said, we're done.®

team when he's coaching because I don't think I've ever done that. Maybe Real Madrid, when he was in Madrid I went to watch couple times. Yeah, just the special one as they call him came to see me, so I'm very happy.

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