

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Rafael Nadal

Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. Just wondering how the last week has been for you in terms of training and if you've been able to make any further progress since the good steps you took in Madrid.

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, I mean, have been a few days at home, then arrived here on Saturday. I was able more or less to practice well the last few days.

I'm excited to be playing in Rome. It's a tournament that bring me back to a lot of unforgettable memories for me. Yeah, let's see. Day by day.

My third week almost in a row on the tour, third tournament almost in a row. That didn't happen since super long time ago. That's good news.

Let's see. I need to keep going. I need to keep exploring how I will be able to manage to play every day. But yeah, I am happy the way that I feel today.

Q. It could be your last time here in Rome. What does this tournament and playing in Italy mean to you?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, it's always a great feeling be playing here. The crowd here is very passionate. It's not a moment to explain all the emotions that I felt in this tournament, this court. Amazing matches with Coria, with Roger the first two times I played here. Then I was able to achieve that tournament a lot of times, no?

Yeah, I mean, is a tournament that is part of the history of our sport. I mean, is a very traditional, important tournament in our tour.

Yeah, I'm excited and feel lucky to be playing here again at this stage of my career. Yeah, I am motivated for tomorrow and for the tournament.

Q. Do you feel the respect towards you from the other players? It's slightly different this year. Do you feel something is more passionate or something has changed?

RAFAEL NADAL: No. The only thing for me change is, of course, today I am not seeded. I am No. 300 in the world. I didn't play for a long time, but I always felt very well treated from the players, from the tournaments, from the people who are around the tournaments, media.

I hope and I really believe that I had a good relationship with almost everyone, no? I mean, didn't change much with the years.

Is true that I think everybody, when you get older, at the end when you are at this stage of my career, I know the people because I have been here or in Barcelona or in Monte-Carlo or in Madrid for almost 20 years, no? I was able to know more and more the people who is working in the tournaments, so the relationship is much closer today than 15 years ago. That's normal, no? You build that relationship with the timing.

Yeah, it's great for me after almost two years without being here to see all these people again. It's always great feelings when you feel that people want to see you again.

Q. What do you think your emotions are going to be at Roland Garros this year? I imagine it will be different from all the past years.

RAFAEL NADAL: I can't have a clear answer. First of all, I want to play Rome. That's the tournament that I am today. I don't think after that. If after that I feel ready to play Roland Garros, I cannot predict what kind of emotions I going to have there.

I just want to enjoy every day. I am enjoying playing tennis, by the way. Always depending on my body how far I can keep going in terms of timings, no?

I am happy doing what I'm doing. When I'm talking about retirement, is not because I'm not happy anymore playing tennis or I'm not feeling myself competitive enough. That's not the case. It's about the body was not able to play weeks in a row, was not able to allow me practice and enjoy the practices in a daily basis.

Then arrive a moment that don't make sense. If you're not able to do the things the proper way in your daily basis, you are not able to enjoy because of the pain and the



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injuries in your daily basis, it's almost impossible to have success or to keep fighting for the things that really motivate me, no?

But now is my third week on the tour almost in a row, so... It's a good moment, even if the results are not what used to be. But I am increasing my feeling, my level.

Let's see. Yeah, I want to keep going.

Q. Your best memory here in this tournament? Which match? Which year? What will stay in your heart about Rome?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I think the first one. I mean, all the unforgettable moments. Most of important moments of tennis have been playing in matches best-of-five because at the end of the day that makes the matches more emotional, more dramatic, the people gets more involved. In a way, I miss that past times when we were playing the Masters 1000s at the best-of-five, those amazing battles that are part of the history of our sport.

At the end is true that I won 10 times here. But if you tell me my memories, I mean, for me I'm much more fresh the memories of the first two victories in five sets against Coria and against Roger than the other days. Even if I had amazing, good matches against Novak, against great players.

But that's what I think the people remember more. Me, as experience, as a player, too. If I have to pick, I going to say the first one and then the second one.

Q. You have spoken of the first one in Rome 19 years ago. What did that Rafa dream? What were the emotions of the first victory? You were a boy.

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, for me was the first time that I won in Monte-Carlo that year, in Barcelona later, then in Rome. All these tournaments are tournaments that have an amazing tradition in our tour. Since I was a kid, I was watching these tournaments on TV. So for me be able to win in Rome, that was amazing for me in that time, no?

I was very young. I had plenty of energy. I have been always a very passionate person, I mean, probably in everything in life, but especially in the sport, not only as a player, but as a fan, too.

So for me to be able to win that first time here, the way that the matches have been great level of tennis, but at the same time I remember 5 hours 14, the match, and losing I think 3-0 in the fifth. I remember the support of the crowd. That atmosphere became amazing, no?

So I can take that match of my memory, honestly.

Q. How can you evaluate a little bit your improvement from your coming back in Barcelona to the last practices in terms of tennis and in terms of physical fit right now?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, it's something that is not every day the same. Is not a line like this (steadily up), it's a little bit like this (up and down). Even after Barcelona, I had some tough moments in Madrid. Even here the first day.

But in a general perspective, the line is going up, without a doubt. So yeah, I mean, happy to be today where I am because one month ago for me was almost impossible to think that I will be able to play in Barcelona, then in Madrid, and now being here in Rome.

Things are happening. Is true that I was able to accept the challenge, accept that some moments I was not able to push the way that I wanted to push.

Doing the things the proper way and trying to avoid a lot of risks in terms of pushing a lot on the matches, I was able to keep moving. Madrid was a good test for me playing I think two days in a row, one match over three hours.

My feelings are better always. In terms of tennis, too. Why not? I am here to try my best. Tomorrow is a start. All the matches are tough for me today and difficult and more unpredictable than what the matches used to be for me, especially on clay.

I accept that role. I accept that challenge. I am excited about the way that I can be able to play if I keep working the proper way and my body allow me.

Q. With the experience you have in terms of years on the tour and injuries, what do you think about the big injuries they have now with very young players like Sinner, Alcaraz? Do you have any idea about which could be the solution? Could be to play one big tournament each month like Formula 1 race or...

RAFAEL NADAL: The injuries have been always there. That's the true. I understand that for you guys Jannik is not playing here is a terrible news, especially the way he's playing this year.

But, I mean, we can talk about that for hours because at the end we have been talking about that for so many years. Now with Carlos and with Jannik not playing here, the conversation is on the table again.

Nothing change. Just the coincidence that two of the best players of the world are injured today. So the conversation is a much deeper conversation that today the three best players of the world are not able to play in Rome.

If we want to talk about why people gets injured, I tell you very clear: when you push your body to the limit, you get injured at the end. When the game is faster and faster and faster, you get injured. When you play most of the year on hard courts and the surfaces are tougher for the body, you get injured. That's the simple answer.

Then other world is on the side. That is about the tournaments. That is about the business, about the sport by itself. That's another conversation.

At the end the players wants to make money. The tournaments wants to make money. Then it's the all cycle that comes together. We accept that role.

Things happens. You don't have to tell me about injuries, that I missed a lot of important, very important tournaments in my career because of the injuries. You cannot complain about that. You accept what's going on. You keep going. You get injured, you have to recover well.

They are young. They are going to have plenty of times to play in Rome and have a lot of success here. No drama. Tournament will survive even without Carlos and Jannik that are super important players for any event, any tournament today.

Especially for Italy, don't have Jannik playing here after all what he represents today in this country, I think it's a terrible news. Even for me as a spectator, as a colleague of him, I feel so sad for him because he deserve to play here.

That's it. I wish him, and Carlos of course, all the best and I wish to meet them in Roland Garros.

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