

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Thursday, 9 May 2024

Roma, Italia

Zizou Bergs

Press Conference

R. NADAL/Z. Bergs

4-6, 6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Obviously a very hard-fought, difficult match. What do you think made the difference in the end?

ZIZOU BERGS: I think the difference still, like so many other matches, are just a few points. Sometimes Rafa came with some very good momentums, very good tennis. The other times it was close to each other foot by foot.

I had some chances on his serve. I think I dropped one game my percentage on my serve, and straight away he managed to break. I think I had more opportunities on his serve, but I didn't take.

When I look back to the match, I feel like at those momentums, I don't feel like I've given him too much. I think he deserved more winning the points because he did different things that he was doing during the match on important points. I tried to mix up, to not be too predictable what I was going to do on the important points. He managed very well.

I think at the end it's still a few points. It's a great battle. Most of the matches are decided by a few points.

Q. Could you explain what it's like playing Rafael Nadal on this surface.

ZIZOU BERGS: Yeah, before the start it's literally living the dream. When you grow up, you watch him all the time on TV, he's your idol, you have photos of you wearing the same clothes as him, want to be him.

I love playing on center courts. I love big momentum. Then having this draw is literally living in a highlight reel.

It's very overwhelming to play him. But on the other side we as a team did an amazing job, really played a game, not the opponent, not the event.



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Being out there, having tons of respect for Rafael Nadal, but also seeing him as your opponent you want to beat and not just want to play. I think we did an amazing job in that part. I think that's why this was a huge battle.

Sometimes you lose because you don't really believe. Maybe that's the case. It hard for me to say. But I really feel like we did our best in our being capable of trying to beat him. I think with the level and the belief and the mentality today, it's the best we could do.

Q. How tough is it facing his ball, the spins and everything he produces?

ZIZOU BERGS: Yeah, I mean, his game is very tough. It's so heavy. Such a high spin balls. Playing my weaknesses. You can tell even his team did homework on me, what I don't like.

The intensity he can give sometimes with his forehand and backhand, it's brutal. It's just a wonderful time playing him. It's what you want to do in your tennis career.

I'm so grateful and humble to share this moment with him on this court in maybe his last season.

Q. This being his last season, you must have felt the emotion, the love the crowd has for Rafa. Did you notice how emotional Rafa was?

ZIZOU BERGS: I didn't really notice how emotional he was. I completely understand the crowd.

Me as a tennis lover, a tennis fan, I wish him all the best. Even when I see him playing other tournaments, I really want to see him win because you want to see a legend as much as you still can on the tennis court.

Missing Roger Federer, still seeing Rafael Nadal, still seeing Djokovic, if these legends are playing on the tennis court, you want to see them as much as possible, but not today (smiling).

Q. You're very close to breaking into the top hundred. What has that been like chasing that goal? How long has this been a goal for you?

ZIZOU BERGS: It's a huge goal. I think at this event there

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are many players that are going pretty light over reaching the top hundred. We in Belgium, especially how I grew up, the dedication I have, we're very humble, we're down to earth.

If you say at school, I want to be top hundred, which I had to say to skip lessons at school to go training, everybody is looking at you like, Who do you think you are?

This goal has been there since I'm probably conscious about tennis, which is the age of seven. We're chasing it so hard. It's such a tough ride that only you as a person, as a tennis player, you can experience and tell to other people. May or may not they believe it. But it's a wonderful journey and you're that close.

Even me going to the village where I used to live or going out, people not only in the professional area but also in the friend area are constantly talking about the top hundred. My team are saying, You should try to put your goals now on another ranking because you're as good as there. I say, No, I just want to enjoy that moment as much as I can when I enter the top hundred.

If I enter the top hundred, for example, if I would win today, I would go out and party because it's the time of reaching being sure you're top hundred, that's your goal since you're seven years old.

I don't feel like we should just focus on the next match. I really want to enjoy. Once it happens, I really want to take it in as much as possible. I cannot wait for that moment to be there.

Q. Has there ever been a time where that's been too much in your head? Some players say, I don't want to look at ranking at all.

ZIZOU BERGS: I definitely understand other players not wanting to see that. But I do really want to see it. As I say, I just want to enjoy the moment as much as possible. If I know I'm playing for that top hundred, as I've been playing the last matches, I just want to know when the moment is there.

Now it's a little bit tough because in the live ranking I'm in it, but next week is still counting. I don't know exactly when I got the match. If I win today, I will sure.

I'm constantly with it. I don't feel like it affects me. I'm a player who cannot have too much pressure on myself. I really enjoy it and I really need it to have that energy in me. So I'm definitely a player who can handle all of that.

Q. Regarding Rafa, you played against him today,

what do you think really about his level, his rhythm, his moving on the court? Do you think he could perform yet in Roland Garros in three weeks?

ZIZOU BERGS: That's very hard for me to say because I didn't have the experience to practice with him up front. I've only seen him playing on the TV. But time to time today, I definitely saw some flashes where I'm saying, Okay, this is Nadal, this is prime Nadal.

Obviously there are some moments where he's not bringing it consistently. What I remember about the past is sometimes people doubt Nadal about French Open. Every time he plays French Open, he starts winning easy, 6-1, 6-2, 6-1, whatever. I never would question being ready on time. I think if he would play, he's going to be ready.

Q. A question about your TikTok. You used to post a lot of interesting videos. You haven't posted much lately. Is that a decision to focus more on tennis? And what do you like about the platform?

ZIZOU BERGS: I think TikTok is a great platform, amazingly booming. So many people on it. We definitely saw it as an opportunity to share the life we're having, what it's like to be a tennis player, everything around. I really enjoyed it.

I don't have to tell you it's time consuming, energy consuming. If you like doing things, it gives you energy. But at a certain moment, you're getting used to everything. If you've been doing it for two, three years, sometimes you just need a break from it.

I felt that I needed it, that I didn't really enjoy it as much any more. I just decided to get a break. Let's see where it's heading to. Maybe I start tomorrow again. Maybe I start in a month or two. Maybe I don't start again.

In general, I think social media is great for the fans to connect with us, showing how it's like and how we're living this sport.

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