

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Thursday, 9 May 2024

Roma, Italia

## Rafael Nadal

### Press Conference

R. NADAL/Z. Bergs

4-6, 6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions anybody?

**Q. As you said in the first press conference, it is your third week in a row on the tour. How much progress do you think you have made since the first match you played in Barcelona?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, today was not a good match for me. I mean, I didn't play the way that I really think I can play and I need to play.

I was able to find a way to win, and that give me the chance to play in two days again, to show myself, especially that I can do it much better than today. That's the feeling I have on my practice sessions.

Of course, improvement, it's important because the biggest improvement is that I still playing. That's the biggest thing and the most important thing for me.

In Barcelona, I was not sure if I was able to keep going. I am serving much better than in Barcelona. I improved that. I feel myself quicker. Sometimes I am playing too far from the baseline. That's something that I want to do it better, and I hope to do it better.

That's it. I really believe that I need to organize my position a little bit better on the court than what I did today. For me, the first set in the last match of Madrid is a good reference the way I need to play. Here is a little bit easier for me because is not altitude. For me that's a good example the way that I need to play.

I think - not in Barcelona - but today I can do it.

**Q. A different question. Andy Murray is planning to retire this year. Can you tell us what you remember about when you first met him when you were younger. What has it been like growing up and playing against him on the bigger stages during your career?**



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RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, well, we know each other since we were small kids because I think he's one year younger. When we were playing by teams - Spain, Great Britain - he was on the team being one year younger. We know each other very well. We grow together on the tour, even when he arrived a little bit later than me.

Yeah, Andy had an amazing career. I think in some way, I mean, I don't like to say he deserve more or less because at the end, if I say I deserve more if I don't have injuries, no? No, I don't, because I had the injuries, no?

He had a lot of finals. He was an amazing player that probably played in a difficult moment of the history of tennis because he share the tour at the prime time of Novak, Roger and myself.

He was, in my feeling, the one that he was at the same level than us in general terms. In terms of victories, it's true that he achieved less. In terms of level of tennis, in terms of hold mentally the winning spirit week after week, he was the only one that was very close to be at the same level than us.

**Q. How hard is it or is it getting easier managing your body in these matches, knowing that you need to think about conserving energy or making sure you're not hurting yourself?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, is tough because I did the things very step by step, trying to make small improvements day by day.

But arrive the moment today that I need to try. I mean, I need to try to play at my hundred percent. Is not easy because I need to lose a little bit of fear that I have in some shots because, for example, in Brisbane I got a tear on the place that I had the surgery last year. Sometimes important surgery like I had, I had to remove an important part of my psoas tendon, put a lot of muscles around working more than before. I mean, it's about having the right time to adapt all these muscles to this new configuration of the hip. But I don't have that much time, no? That's the problem and that's the true.

I say in Madrid, but I really hope that I will be able to have this progress since the beginning of the season till Monte-Carlo that I was able to start playing at my hundred



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percent in Monte-Carlo. That was not the case because I had an abdominal thing.

I did this progress the last three weeks on the tour. But arrive the moment that I need to try, I need to go for everything. If something happens, something happens. That's the true.

Is not like in Madrid, is not like in Barcelona, especially that I need to analyze how the things are improving, to explore if I am able to adapt all these things to the new weeks. But that's over and we are in Rome.

I have Roland Garros in just two weeks and a half, so... Arrive a moment that I need to prove myself if I am able to push my body to the limit that I need to push to feel myself ready for what's coming.

I am not talking only about Roland Garros. I am talking about the next match. I need to lose this fear. Matches like today help. Some moments I was moving faster. Some moments not. I need to get used to that, to take that risk.

It's a moment to me that happen. If something wrong happens, we going to accept it. But that's the moment to push. I feel more ready to try it than before.

**Q. What is the dominant feeling after that game? The frustration or deception, like you said, you don't play well, or is something positive because you find a way to be able to win the game?**

RAFAEL NADAL: No, I see it like a very positive today. Even if I didn't play well, that for me was a little bit in some ways surprising, in another hand not surprising because I didn't play much tennis for almost two years.

I need to accept that my level, it's a little bit more on and off. It's not like used to be that was very stable everything. I need to find this stability again. Matches like today helps, no?

I felt myself before the match ready to play at the good level of tennis because I am feeling the ball much better on the practice sessions than what I felt in Barcelona and in Madrid.

I feel myself closer to show something probably much more positive that what I showed since the day of today. Then I need to do it. That's a different story.

I feel myself closer. That's why I was on the court even without playing well but telling myself I need to go through and explore the options that I can do it much better the

next day because my feelings on the practice are much better than what I had, the level I showed today on court.

Maybe in two days I will not play well. That's true. That's a possibility. But I hope to be able to play much better than today, to start thinking another way.

Let's see. I mean, I am excited with the victory. That's give me the chance to keep going. I am very happy for that.

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