

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

## Stefanos Tsitsipas

Press Conference

S. TSITSIPAS/C. Norrie

6-2, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: First of all, congratulations, Stef. Solid performance today. Would you summarize this match.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I had a great start of the match. It felt like my shots were pressing a lot. My topspin was very heavy. At the very beginning of the match, I came in fresh to start opening up the court, hitting big shots. They all seemed to work pretty well entering the court most of the time.

My serve I think was a big factor to start the match in such way because I came up with some great serves, placing those serves exceptionally well, getting free points here and there on the serve.

I think you would say clay, well, the reward on your serve is not the biggest one in terms of surface, but I managed to get a few important points with my serve, kind of getting a lead without having to get close in the score.

The second set was absolutely a battle. He was adjusting. He was trying to find ways to win more points. It seemed like he wasn't able to come up with a certain plan in the first set, but the second was very different in terms of tactics and also applying his own game a little bit more where he started approaching, he started adding a bit more topspin, going through the ball a little bit more than before. I had to move a little bit more. I had to work more for the points, which I felt straightaway. It absolutely gave me a lot to work with towards the end.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. I'm writing a piece about rankings. A lot of players say they don't look at rankings, they don't look at points. You're someone who always mentions your ranking targets. Could you explain your philosophy on this and why it's important to you to have those targets.**



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STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I don't look at rankings either, so...

**Q. You talk about points.**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Well, yes, of course.

**Q. In Madrid you said there's 6,000 points in the clay court season and you're trying to follow that.**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I think it's more than 6,000.

**Q. You said that's what you were aiming for.**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Yeah, yeah, that would be great, amazing (smiling).

**Q. Why is that important to follow that?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Well, it's important because you're maximizing the swing, the clay court swing. Take a look at the rankings, you try to accumulate as many points on each surface. That's the end goal.

I look at it this way. There aren't that many points to collect during a grass court season. I would assume it's close to 3,000 if you do marvelous on the grass courts. You can get up to 3,000. I think clay court is about 6,000. I made some of the calculations. Hard court is obviously the most amount of points, falling all the way to 12,000 or even more than that. There's a big potential to do great there, accumulate as many points as possible.

At the end of the day it's important because these are the things that you're working for to improve. That's where you see improvement, in those numbers. Those numbers don't lie. They say everything.

I personally don't look at them. I don't put too much emphasis on the numbers when I'm competing or during playing weeks. It all comes with performance. It all comes up to showing up and being consistent. These are the type of things that I try and focus on. The rest comes in its own ways.

**Q. In terms of the performances from Rafa and Novak here this week, considering the injuries to Jannik and Alcaraz, are you and maybe some of the other players**



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**in your position of the rankings starting to think about it being more of an opportunity, not only here but in Paris?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Well, it is the way it is now. It's a type of thing that hurt the sport a little bit, to have these type of things happen to the highest of the players. Without them, the show is not kind of the same. You have obviously the guys behind them. These kind of tournaments deserve names like this to be playing, active, have the opportunity to play in front of these big stadiums and crowds.

I've spoken about the fact that the schedule has a big toll on our bodies. It starts from the mental side, and it follows to the physical side. The extension of the days in the Masters 1000s I think plays a massive role and contributes a lot to the fact that these players are getting injured.

It was perhaps already a lot the way it was before with the seven-day events. Adding more days to that, well, you got to be some type of superhero to be consistent back to back 10 days in each event getting to the very end of it. It's not a very easy thing to do. Some people need to try it first to get an understanding and how it is to pull that off. Then they should make decisions based on that.

I think I really don't wish them that in the future. I think this is not going to be the first time we see these type of things. If these type of things continue with the same schedule not being adjusted or customized to the needs of the players, we might see more of these things occur in the future.

**Q. What about the next stage against de Minaur? What kind of player is he? What do you expect?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I think everyone knows Alex de Minaur. He's fighting. He puts everything out on the court every single time he plays any opponent. He's someone that can run. He can battle. He can grind. It's not going to be an easy match.

I've played him a lot of times. I feel like he has improved a lot the last couple times I got to play him. He is a much better player. The job I have is to get out there, obviously demonstrate the best that I can in terms of tennis, use my weapons effectively, be consistent. It is important with players like this to be consistent, to just stay as much as you can.

**Q. With those top players out or struggling, how much of an opportunity is it for a player like you now?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: It is an opportunity, for sure. Well, I think it's a no-brainer to say it's not. It's kind of

obvious. We're stating something that is completely obvious. I don't really need to add anything to it. I think everyone knows the answer to that.

**Q. Andy Murray is changing his racquet to Yonex at this late point in his career.**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: What?

**Q. Murray is changing his racquet to Yonex at this late point in his career.**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Sorry, I didn't expect that thing to come up. Sorry.

**Q. When was the last time you changed your racquet, not the brand, but the specs?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: The specs of the racquet?

**Q. Yes.**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: The last change that I had regarding my racquet was when I was about 18 years old. I think that was the switch. I added a bit more weight to my racquet. It was the same exact racquet as now, but a little bit lighter.

Well, it helped me with a little bit more power, a little bit more control to my shots, less swing to it, but more control and precision.

I haven't done a lot of racquet switches and changes in recent years. I've been keeping my pattern and weight and string tension kind of consistent. It has served me relatively well.

I might be a bit more open-minded to it towards the end of the year. We'll see. These are the moments you try to go try things and experiment with a few changes, but definitely not during the season. This is something that I wouldn't be too open-minded to try.

**Q. Something you did try to change at the beginning of the year was your service motion. You had the back issue, I believe.**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Correct.

**Q. I think you went back to the old motion.**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: You think (laughter)?

**Q. The process as to why you changed, what you changed, and why you decided to go back?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Well, I had a whole conversation about this thing yesterday. It's good you ask.

I tried it. I see a lot of players have switched to that, so I decided to give it a go to try it, to see how it responds. A lot of players have actually improved to getting to a pinpoint position. One of them is Jannik Sinner. You could see it over the years, the evolution of his serve and how much he increased precision and power, easier power. This is why also I try to follow that direction.

It worked out pretty well in the beginning. I started getting a good rhythm to it and felt like it could belong to me, that change could be something positive.

I tried it for about six weeks. What I noticed and what I saw in my serve, it started - is that the right term, 'degrading'? - wasn't as consistent anymore. I couldn't fix certain things. I had an issue with a few things such as depth. I couldn't fix it regardless of what I tried, so I went back to my old serve.

I did something strange, which I've never done before in a match, I was trying different things during the match, which is definitely something I don't recommend to anyone doing because it can really throw you off mentally.

I took my final decision and went back to my old serve. It has served me well over the years. My back doesn't hurt anymore, which is important. My back was not in such a great place three months ago. Went back to my own serve, stance, platform, something I feel very familiar with. I feel confident. I feel like I can open up the court easier in a way.

It's definitely part of my identity and how I served from the very beginning when I picked up a tennis racquet.

**Q. In 2021 seems to me that your level of play were very similar, very near to Nole and Rafa. I think you are the player so close to the top position. Now everything is changed because they were older. Don't you think that now you are the best candidate No. 1?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I'm still far away. Yes, I would say so. Why not? I've been thinking towards that direction already for a few years. I never saw a reason not to follow my dreams in that depth. It would be a blessing if I was able to conquer and make that happen. It's been my dream since the first day of pursuing professional tennis.

I'm happy that I got back into the top 10. Let's start from there (smiling). I was outside the top 10 for a while. It hurt me a little bit. So being back, it's a great feeling.

I want to add new goals now. I want to set new heights. I need a few more. I need a few more. You know what I mean? I need a few more wins. I need a few more big, difficult matches where I will have to endure those and win those.

It doesn't come like this. I haven't pushed enough yet to deserve that spot. I know what it takes to get there. I'm still patient and I'm waiting for my moment.

**Q. Regarding your serve, things in general, how difficult is it to make significant changes to your game when certain things you've been doing for such a long time?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: It has a toll on you mentally. There's a certain rhythm you assert into your game that gets you into a flow state. Breaking up that pattern and doing certain things differently, it ruins your rhythm. It ruins your, let's say, flow that I just described. It gets you thinking.

Once you start thinking a lot, it's an issue because you can't concentrate on what's happening in front of you. Your mind travels in different directions and places. This is something also that caused that when I was playing. I just couldn't get into the flow in the same way that I did before. It definitely had a destructive tendency into my game.

We know that men's tennis is all about serve. It's a very important element that you integrate into your game. It can help you win matches, it can help you win titles and reach rankings, clinch tournaments that without it, it would be double the effort. It plays a significant role in how good you play a tennis match.

Of course, if it's not there and it doesn't serve you, it can really have an effect on other parts of your game such as baseline, net game. It's a chain at the end of the day.

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