

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Thursday, 7 May 2026

Roma, Italia

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

An interview with:

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

THE MODERATOR: Novak, welcome back to the ATP Tour. We haven't seen you since Indian Wells. How are you holding up and how do you look forward to the match tomorrow against Prizmic?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: That's funny, 'welcome back to the ATP Tour'. It's funny. I didn't hear it from you for a long time. Playing two tournaments this year, obviously makes sense how you phrased the question (smiling).

It feels great to be back. I was looking forward to compete, to go back to playing tournaments. I wanted to be back on the tour earlier, but unfortunately the injury prevented me to do that, so I had to wait a bit more and progressively improve the state of the body and obviously get ready for Roma, the city and the tournament that I truly love, and I had great success in for many years.

The ultimate goal on this surface is Roland Garros and trying to get ready to play my best tennis there. But nevertheless I do want to do well here, so I do have a lower expectations.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Can I ask you about Aryna Sabalenka's comments suggesting the players could at some point boycott a Grand Slam over this prize dispute, prize money? Do you think this is a cause that potentially merits strike action? Could you personally ever see yourself boycotting one of the slams?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I think you've been around the tour long enough to I think remember the times when I was a president of the council, when I was also forming PTPA, which is now six years ago. So you guys know my position on that. I've said it many times. I don't need to talk about that too long.

Players know that they'll always have my support, and that's all. The new generations are coming up. I'm glad



INTERNAZIONALI
BNL D'ITALIA

BNP PARIBAS

that there is willingness from the leaders of our sport, like Sabalenka, to really step up and really understand the dynamics of how the tennis politics works and understand the nuances and really what needs to be done not only for her benefit and well-being, but for everyone.

That's a true leadership for me and I think she needs to maintain that. I salute that. That's all I have to say about that.

We're all part of the same sport. We all try to elevate the game, whether it's players, tournaments, governing bodies. Unfortunately oftentimes there is a conflict of interest that some people don't want to address. I think that's where the players really have the power.

I'm always supportive of the stronger player position in the ecosystem.

Q. Given as you said kind of what you've done in terms of tennis politics in the past, do you feel part of this movement or do you watch on the new generation, encouraging them from the side?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I am watching more from the side, to be honest. I haven't been part of those meetings and conversations.

But my position is very clear: I support the players and always will support stronger player position in the ecosystem, as I said.

Q. Jannik was talking about how he felt in other sports if the top players spoke out on these topics, they'd be listened to much more quickly. In your experience, how difficult is it in tennis, the fact with the Grand Slams there are four different entities you deal with, seven governing bodies? How much more challenging does that make it?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: As I said, this is not the first time I'm getting these questions. I know this is a hot topic now, you guys want to talk about it. But if you go back to many of my conferences, you'll see how I went into detail and depth on this. This is not new subject, new topic. It's been ongoing for many, many years.

Well, as long as I'm playing I know this has been topic.



... when all is said, we're done.®

Sometimes it kind of becomes more interesting in public or you guys ask us questions on that, sometimes not. It just really varies.

Now is the time to talk about it. I do like the fact that there is more conversations happening on this. It needs to be 'cause players' position is not where it needs to be with slams, with tours. Just overall it's not there. Hence the reason why I co-founded the players association, PTPA. That was my kind of search for more profound, meaningful solution a little bit outside of a system because the system is set up in such way that it just doesn't benefit players across all fields.

You know, also in the past what I notice is many times people would twist particularly my words and say I'm requesting myself for more money, even when I was winning slams. You guys like to put headlines of the Grand Slam winner gets so-and-so, never more in history.

But we are not talking about the lower-ranked players, the tier one, the ground base level of the tennis players that are struggling. They're leaving tennis because of no funding. We are I think the only global sport, if you see all the global sports, I think we're the only ones that are in this particular situation where we don't have a certain financial, say, gains or guarantees for the lower-ranked players. I don't know if it changed since whatever, a few years.

We were in the PTPA back in the days counting and doing studies and investigating on how many players across men's and women's, singles, doubles, live out of this sport. It's very, very small number.

When we talk about living out of this sport is when you do your P&L at the end of the day and you have all the costs that you have to cover, traveling and your team, that you actually have some savings to be able to invest in something else. It's a very little number.

So the end of the day this is always an open discussion. Tennis, as any big global sport, is a big business. It's not that simple. Of course, it needs to be approached from all sides with willingness to work together and figure out what the formula is.

Also something that needs to be said is that the monopoly of our sport is very strong. If you go back when the ATP for example was founded back in, what is it, beginning of the '90s or end of '80s, the tennis has changed a lot, but there's certain things within the structure that hasn't changed.

The players within the player council have really absolutely no power. I've been there. I was president of the council.

I've been there many years. In public you may think there is some power by electing the representative of players, then there's a board, the whole structure is just conceptualized in a certain way where players are just not able to get what they want. That's hence why the top players come together and try to negotiate directly with slams, which I think is the right way. You have to try to figure out ways to benefit.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports