

Rolex Paris Masters

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Paris, France

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Obviously it's been a little bit since you have played an ATP event, so I'm curious how excited you are, obviously first event back, being such a big tournament, Masters 1000 and also now that you're chasing year-end No. 1 for a big record.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes, I am excited to come back to competition. It's been a while, as you said, that I have played an ATP event. Last few events were Grand Slams and Olympic Games. You know, it was an exhausting season overall, very successful one, but it did require a lot of mental effort and energy to deal with a lot of things also off the court and all the expectations and pressures of potential calendar slam, golden slam.

All in all, I'm pleased to be back. I have been training really well last couple of weeks. And I have had plenty of success in Paris-Bercy over the years, so that gives me enough reason to believe that I can do well, and I can go far in the tournament.

But having said that, the lack of match play could be dangerous, so I have to really make sure that I start off my first match very well with a good intensity and build my form as that match passes on and hopefully get a win and get myself more comfortable on this court and just getting that match play in.

The year-end No. 1 is on the line between Medvedev and myself, and I'm in a pretty good position in terms of the ranking points and the race, so that's obviously the goal for the end of the season other than trying to do well in the Davis Cup with the national team. So hopefully I can have a strong finish of the season and clinch that year-end No. 1.

Q. Obviously we haven't seen you since the US Open. I realize that this is not something that applies just to you, but obviously you're a very key man when it comes to the Australian Open. I'm just wondering if you could update us, given the kind of statements that have been coming from Australia, about your feelings

and likelihood of playing the Australian Open.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I'm going to decide on whether I go to Australia or not after I see the official statement from Tennis Australia. Right now we don't have any official announcement or statement. So until that's out, I won't be talking about this anymore, because, you know, I don't want to be part of the stories about the assumptions and what-ifs.

When official condition requirements to travel to Australia and play in Australia are out, then obviously I'll see what I personally do with that, and also the bigger group of the players, you know, because the situation is obviously different in Australia than most parts of the world.

Q. I know that you and Daniil practiced together a couple of days ago at Patrick's academy, and I'm wondering, what is it about his game that is so masterful and so much trouble for so many players? Does he have any weakness that you can speak to?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, every player has a weakness, but, you know, I don't want to publicly talk about what I see in his game as a weakness. But he has definitely improved a lot, and the Grand Slam win in US Open for him did not come as a surprise to me, considering the quality that he possesses.

He has a tremendous serve. Once he has the rhythm on the serve, he has a very high percentage of that first serve, and he hits his spots in the box incredibly well. I mean, that's the biggest weapon of his game, without a doubt.

And then, of course, that backhand that is very flat, and he's just, as strong as a wall from that side, he just doesn't miss. On the forehand side, that side was weaker in the previous years. He has improved that a lot, so there is not a big weakness on that side of the court for him anymore as much as maybe it was some years ago.

So he's very professional, you know, he's very smart player on the court. He goes around his daily duties very seriously, and, you know, he has a good team of people around him. And then that, you know, obviously benefits

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him and he gets the results as a positive consequence for his work.

You know, he's tall. He's very agile for his height, I think. He gets a lot of balls back. He's game savvy. You know, he understands how to use the court, how to position himself when he's defending, when he's attacking. I think his net game has improved, as well. So he doesn't hesitate to come forward. You know, he's always been an overall player, but he did have certain differences in his game, or maybe weaknesses if you want to call them that way, where you could, you know, maybe you could figure out the way to beat him.

But nowadays, he's becoming more all-around player, more complete, and as a result, he's a Grand Slam champion fighting for year-end No. 1. As I said, it comes as no surprise to me.

Q. How long does it take for you to recover from the difficult loss in New York, and how many days did you spend without tennis afterwards?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I have learned over the years to deal with losses in such way that I treat them as great opportunities for growth. I feel that the US Open loss in the finals has arrived, you know, arguably at the worst or at the best time for me, in a way.

Of course I'm disappointed that I lost the match, but I feel like I was blessed to experience love from the crowd and support from the stadium that I have never experienced before in my life in New York, and actually not in many places around the world. And that kind of energy that I received from the crowd from the moment I stepped in the court until I stepped out is a win for life, is a win for, you know, for this human relationship, so to say. They just, as I said, on the court touched my heart.

I was also caught by surprise in a way. I did not expect that much positivity and support and love going my way. So I was -- maybe it did influence my game, because I'm kind of always used to going into most of the places into kind of hostile environment in the big matches where I'm also kind of playing in a way against the opponent and crowds. And so it just wasn't that day, I just wasn't present on the court in terms of my game as I was supposed to be to win that match.

But in the end of the day, as I said, it's a great lesson, it's a great opportunity for growth, to, in a way, close the chapter of Grand Slams this year with three wins and one finals. And of course, in a most ideal scenario, I would win four of four of them. But knowing I was so close gives me great encouragement for the future, but it also makes me feel

humble about my game, about my career, and it gives me a kind of reality check where I have to go back to the practice court, so to say, and really understand what needs to be done so that I could improve.

There is always something to improve, there is always something to be worked on. So let's see how emotionally recovered I am and ready for competition at the highest level. I don't know. I haven't played a tournament since US Open. You know, as I said at the beginning of the answer to your question, I feel like over the years I learned to deal with losses in a way that is going to allow me to learn and grow from that, but, you know, this was not an ordinary loss, so to say, considering the circumstances.

And the season was very draining for me and demanding in every aspect, but I have had similar situations before where I was just super tired, but somehow managed to find the strength and finish the year and finish the season strong. Hopefully that will be the case again.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

Q. Thank you for your answers in French. It's beautiful what you have just said regarding the US Open. How has this final changed you? Do we have a different Novak from now onwards? Thanks to what you felt, this strong emotion you felt on the court, so much love from the crowd, does it make you more quiet, more relaxed now when you go into the court? Are you now sure that you have won the crowd over?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I hope to have that kind of relationship with the crowd, in New York, in France. This feeling that I had in New York was very special. I did not expect this. For the last 15 years I did not have this support, and I was very much moved by the crowd's support, and I'm very grateful.

It's different. It's different when you play in the U.S. or elsewhere in the world. I cannot expect from every crowd in every tournament where I play to have the crowd's support. However, it is true that I am sad for this loss, for this particular match, because it was one of the greatest matches of my career.

But it was still a win for me, because I did win the crowds over. So it's also very important for my personality, for my emotional state, and I hope that I can draw upon this energy here in Paris.

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