

Rolex Paris Masters

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Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/D. Medvedev

4-6, 6-3, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. It's been some week for you. You overtook Pete Sampras for No. 1 finishes. You have overtaken Nadal for Masters titles. This year you've equaled Nadal and Federer. You said while you're playing it's difficult to take that in. How much does it mean to you? How much would it mean to you to equal Federer with six ATP Finals titles?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I consider myself a student of the sport, and I really respect and admire all of the past champions that paved the way for me and, you know, all the generations that are playing tennis right now. We are enjoying the benefits of this game in every sense because of the past champions that made the tour the way it is today.

I'm very grateful for that. Of course, when I surpass one of the past champions, particularly someone that I looked up to when I was a kid like Pete Sampras, it means the world to me. It's kind of a surreal feeling.

But, yes, I mean, in general terms, it's just difficult for me to just reflect fully on what was achieved. Not just this week but just in general in my career, because, you know, tennis season is the longest season in all sports. It just requires you to right away take the next step, turn the next page, see what's the next challenge, what's the next tournament, how can I recover, rejuvenate, and then prepare for what's coming up, the next challenge.

I can't really fully devote myself to thinking about the historic achievements, but of course it means the world to me to be in this position because that's obviously one of the biggest motivations of why I still play professional tennis.

Q. Congratulations. It has been a big week for you. Specifically about today's final, when Daniil won the

first set, he then won four consecutive sets off you, but what turned or do you feel it turned in the fourth game of the second set when you broke serve?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, even though I lost the first set, I still felt it was quite close. You know, I was 3-2 up and breakpoint. He played, he served well, played the next game when he broke my serve pretty well. I was still trying to read his serve and I wasn't really, I think, consistent from baseline. Was making some unforced errors that allowed him to kind of clinch out the first set, close out the first set with not too many problems and struggles.

But, you know, I knew that, you know, that things will get better and better, because I felt good on the court coming into the match today. More relaxed, you know, because I didn't have the pressure that I need to win because of the rankings or anything like that.

I just felt like I could maybe play the style of tennis that I really want to play every single match, you know, come in to the net and be a little bit more free on the shots, swing through the ball.

That's what was happening pretty much the entire match, especially in the second and the third set. Yes, you know, that break of his serve in the fourth game of second set was probably the turning point. I got the crowd involved. We played some great rallies.

You know, I held my serve very well from that moment. Actually I got probably more free points on my first serve than I would expect, because he's such a great returner, he reads the game well, he makes you suffer really on his return games. He just makes you play always an extra shot. He always puts you in a very uncomfortable position on the court.

But on the other side, he wins his service games quite fast and comfortably, because he just has a big serve. And he's improved over the years, coming to the net, not afraid to be aggressive.

So it was just a very close match, a game of very small margins here and there, a few points. Just been very

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pleased with the way I held my nerves in the end and managed to close out the match with a winner.

Q. In the first set you seemed to be very loose, you know, very relaxed, very incredible gesture, like cool. Very strange. How did you explain that?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, as I said, you know, I felt a huge relief knowing that I achieved a goal that was the biggest goal of this week, you know, which was to clinch the year-end No. 1. When I did that yesterday, you know, I just kind of felt more relaxed today.

Even though there is always a pressure playing against No. 2 of the world and probably my biggest rival in tennis at the moment in this season, and, you know, I wanted to finish the tournament with a trophy. There is no doubt about it.

But, you know, I didn't want to lock myself in mentally and emotionally into this stressful mode where I'm unable to kind of swing freely. So it's not like I didn't care. I just felt a little bit more relaxed, and I knew that things will come together. I just had to kind of work my way into the match a bit more.

Q. You have said he's one of your biggest rivals at the moment. He's been called the Octopus, and I think Iga Swiatek just compared him to a pretzel. Can you tell me what makes him so difficult to play against, even though you played him today?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I just mentioned, you know, big serve and just moves very well for his height. There are no holes in his game right now. I mean, both forehand and backhand are very solid. Just running forehand, forehand from mid court, something that probably wasn't his forte in the past, now he has improved a lot.

It's just he always makes you play. You know, he has a way to come back to the point from really difficult positions. So, you know, for someone of his height, the movement and the defense is fantastic. And also, he has improved in his aggressive style. So he takes the ball and comes to the net, and his volleys have improved as well which was maybe his weakness in the past.

Yeah, he's one of the guys that you see, where you see the commitment and devotion to every day training and trying to perfect his game. He's a very smart guy also and nice guy. Tries to maximize his potential.

He's a complete, all-around player. Obviously with his flat shots that he has, clay is the less-suitable surface to him, but I'm sure he's going to do his best to improve even

there.

He's closing into on the World No. 1 rankings. I'm sure he's going to get it eventually, and when he does, it's completely deserved, because he's the leader of the next generation of players, where you have Zverev, Dominic Thiem, Tsitsipas, Rublev, these guys. You know, they are already there. They are challenging the three of us old guys, and we're going to try to hang in there and win big tournaments along with the young generation.

Q. Well done. Six Bercy wins, 86 tournaments, 37 Masters. But the number that strikes me more is that you went to the net 36 times. You reminded me Wilander going 132 times versus Lendl in the US Open Final 1988. How difficult it was, especially since that court is not that fast? What do you expect to be the court in Turin?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, that was definitely part of the tactical plan and strategy, you know, to try to take away the time from Daniil, mix it up, put some variety in my game, play serve and volley and open the court, because he stands really far back, so, you know, he puts a lot of returns back in play. As I said previously, he's just so good in staying in the point and making you suffer and forcing you to do an unforced error.

So, you know, you have to have, in a way, a controlled aggression against him. I managed to do that. I managed to have quite a good success rate on the net, particularly in those serve-and-volley points when I was trying to take away, as I said, the time from him.

You know, I wanted to keep him on his toes, that he doesn't know what's coming up next, to be a little bit unpredictable. You need to do it against him, he likes the pace, he likes the tempo. Doesn't work always, but I think this is the right game plan.

Yes, the court is not too fast. I mean, the court is, let's say, medium speed, but the balls were pretty big and fluffy and balls are quite slow, so that makes it more difficult to finish the points quite soon. But it also allowed me to return his serve better today than I think that was the case in New York.

I don't know what the courts or balls, how the balls or courts will be or conditions in Turin. Let's see.

Q. Yesterday we were talking about the No. 1 aspect, which you felt was a bigger deal for you, breaking Federer's record or the Sampras one that you also held. You said you couldn't distinguish. Does what you have achieved with the year-end No. 1 ranking

with this new record make up or, you know, provide any sort of makeup for the Grand Slam?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I mean, I already closed that chapter, to be honest. I'm not regretting it, really. I'm not spending days suffering because I didn't take the calendar slam this year.

I'm very relieved that the calendar, that the Grand Slam season was done, because I felt a tremendous pressure unlike anything I felt in my life. So, you know, it was an interesting experience, and I'm very satisfied with the way I played in Grand Slams, three wins and a final. I mean, there is much more positive things to be, you know, grateful for and to look at than negative.

So, you know, I moved on from that and focused on the Masters events, and here in Bercy, and I did what I came here to do, which is, you know, clinch the year-end No. 1 and win the trophy.

So that's where my attention is at the moment, and I'm just very pleased to do that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

Q. Congrats for this week and this wonderful final. What kind of taste has this title for you? Does it set off, as you said earlier in English, does it set off or mitigate the disappointment of the calendar Grand Slam's loss?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Honestly, no. I'm over and done with Grand Slams with this year. I have no negative feelings about it. There are a lot of positive elements to focus on.

I won three Grand Slams, I actually played a final in New York. It's not the ideal scenario, I did not win the final against Medvedev, but I felt relieved at the end, because there was so much pressure, immense pressure on my shoulders. Never have I lived such pressure throughout my career.

Once again, I have just wrapped up the season being No. 1 worldwide. That was my main objective for this last part of the season, and I'm very proud of it. I'm very satisfied, very happy about it.

We still have a lot of years to come, and I'll certainly have the opportunity to win Grand Slams. The situation is different. I'm not young anymore, as Medvedev and the next gen is. But I feel good. I'm motivated, and I want to make progress again.

Q. Congrats. To follow up on that question, 37th

Masters 1000s, is one more than Nadal. The box of your records seems to be bursting out. Is that something that you want to do, breaking every single record?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Throughout my career, I have always been honest enough to say that the history of our sport is too big a motivation. It is an objective, yes, to prove that I can break all the records with all the results that I can obtain on the tour professionally.

So, yes, I love breaking records. I'm very motivated to carry on. My priority is the Grand Slams and Masters 1000 where you can gain the largest number of points. This is an added benefit of our sport.

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