

Rolex Paris Masters

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Gilles Simon

Press Conference



F. AUGER-ALIASSIME/G. Simon

6-1, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. Gilles, how does it feel? I mean, is there a strange sort of feeling with you? What did it feel like during the match?

GILLES SIMON: During the match, during the match it was really difficult because I was empty, and I don't know how to say it, it's not injured, but my body was not responding (smiling). I was trying to push, but it was like really difficult, and I felt it really early.

But I kind of expected it. It's not a big surprise also. So I just tried to play a bit different in the second set. I just wanted to score as many games as possible, you know, for maybe the crowd to enjoy it a bit more for the last time.

But I was just too far, and it was, yeah, that's how it was.

Q. And now?

GILLES SIMON: And now I feel empty still, and still injured on the left leg (smiling). But I don't care anymore, because I don't need it.

I'm really tired. I think it helps, I think it helps to stay calm and relax, because I still feel a lot of emotions coming, but I'm just too tired to face it right now. Maybe it's gonna come later.

It was a very, very long week. Even last week. I was feeling the moment coming, and, you know, it's gonna be a big crowd. You don't know how you're gonna play, if you're gonna be on the level starting with Andy, which has a very good record against me.

And, yeah, you just want to enjoy the crowd one more time, because that's the only thing it is about at this point. It's not like I plan to win the tournament. It's not like I need the points to enter the next tournament. It's just going on court

and trying to play a decent match with a good level, you know, to enjoy the crowd one more time. I'm not sure if I'm able to do it.

Yeah, it was tough. The first match was really, really hard on the emotional side, especially on court. I was happy to find some solution. Then the second match was better, because that's always how it is when you're a bit tired. You think less (smiling).

I think the mix was better with Taylor. It was really a good match. But then, yeah, the third one is the one too much. I was just empty today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

Q. What do you want people to remember you in terms of a tennis player? If they should qualify you in one word what word would you choose?

GILLES SIMON: Nothing. I let them choose. Judgments, I will never judge myself. I let you do that and I let the crowd do that.

Q. Do you have regrets? On one match, on one career choice, a choice of a coach, or a period of your career that you would like to change now?

GILLES SIMON: Yes, certainly there are things I could have improved, things that could have been done better, but it goes both ways. That's why overall I have no regrets, because as I said yesterday, for me, it doesn't change. I just feel so lucky to have been a tennis player. It's what I have always wanted to be. I was a professional tennis player for a long time, and that's why I was lucky twice and I could stop when I wanted, and so I have been lucky three times.

The rest, could it have been better or worse out of 20 years? Of course. It could have gone in both directions, but it's also how you learn, and that's the goal. It's an individual sport. You need to learn to know yourself, to make errors, to be able to not repeat them. We need to be smart when we do things that are good, to try and repeat them, try to not make mistakes.

Sometimes you're lucky and you win by doing something you think it was good. So you just have to get to know yourself. It's part of the journey.

Of course knowing what I know now, if I would do things differently, but that's valid for all players. But it's not a regret.

Q. Did emotions look like what you had imagined today? Is it when you served the match or the match point, taking the microphone?

GILLES SIMON: No, not really, because they were also related to the state of tiredness. It would have been different if it had been the first round. Everything could have happened differently.

I think that luckily for me, the tiredness enabled me to stay more composed, so I was more serene than what I had thought.

Q. Are you sad, happy, proud?

GILLES SIMON: I'm serene. Because I was sure about my decision, as I explained. I was certain I had made the right decision. This week, every match reminded me why I was so sure.

The stress before the match, the pain after the matches, and one match after the other, it was something that was becoming difficult to bear, knowing that there is a part of the career where you do it, but you progress or you're in the middle of your career so it's normal, and you win matches and it's necessary and it's okay. And at some point you have the same stress, same pain, but then you don't win anymore. So it's no longer the same story when you feel that you are no longer progressing and it becomes really difficult.

And because of that, the stress increases and the pain increases with age. So it was becoming hard. So I don't regret. This week has been very difficult with the three matches that leave me totally empty, so it reminds me why I stopped. So there is a part of me that is relieved that this will stop.

But again, there are a lot of things I loved. That's why I always wanted to be a tennis player. It has always been my passion. That's why I said I was lucky and lucky to play a long time.

But it's not as if everything had been total happiness from 8 a.m. to bedtime. Some things that will stop, I will not miss them. The airports, I will not miss the airports. I have a list

which I will not miss certainly.

The journalists, I will miss the journalists (smiling).

Q. I was going to ask you if you had intuitions regarding what you will miss. So the reason why you stop are very clear. We understand them. It's a new life that opens up for you. So you say this, this, and this, I could miss that, I don't know how...

GILLES SIMON: Well, I will play tennis. I always loved playing tennis. I have always played tennis, so why I stop is because I am no longer to do that because it's too painful.

But in my mind, I'm a tennis player. Whatever I do afterwards, in my mind, I will be a tennis player. I have stopped because I cannot continue. If I was in perfect shape and I could play normally, I would play 20 years more. But that's it.

So simply playing. So I had the chance of playing for 20 years, for a very long time. And we say 20 years, because we say 20 years since the first ATP point, but I started playing at 6. At 10 I was already playing in French Championships, and at 13 I was in sport-etudes. So it's a long career, very long career.

It's nice, but it will now leave me time to do other things so it's going to be cool. But mainly, I will miss that, because I have always felt as a tennis player, and tomorrow morning I won't be a tennis player anymore.

Q. I remember when you published your book two years ago, you talked about the after. I understand you didn't want to be a consultant or president of the French Tennis Federation, but there was a need of transmission in a way or another, but it was not very mature. Now that you are stopping, do you have a clearer vision of what you would like to do in how you want to stay in tennis? Because I think you wanted to do that, or do you keep that for afterwards?

GILLES SIMON: It's still not clear at all. I wrote a book, which for me, it took a long time for me to write it, because at the beginning I didn't want to write it. But thanks to Olivia and my wife, I ended up writing it to talk about something that was very important to me. What I have identified as lack in our vision of tennis and our training schemes for players to win big titles.

I wanted to write it, I wrote it, and there was no other objective than to write it. I just wanted to put it there, and you do what you want with it.

I registered in the training to be a tennis coach, and Monday I will start this training. Not to start training as of next year. So it's still not clear what I want to do, but indeed the desire to transmit is already present and will be there in the future. But I don't have the exact shape and I don't know exactly how and when I will be able to do that, because there is something more important than transmitting. It's my family. So this will come afterwards.

So I will first try to enjoy staying home, and I have time to transmit. So it will certainly be decided in the next one or two years. But right now, I'm waiting for it to mature, and I train myself in the waiting.

Q. Regarding transmission, yesterday you were saying that it was a difficult journey to know yourself and manage moments in your life when it was not easy. And you also said Nadal and Djoko learned how to do it earlier than the French players. Could you elaborate on this? Why were they able to mature on that faster than French players? Is it in this respect that you would like to help French tennis?

GILLES SIMON: Yes, I wrote a book on this topic, so yes, it's an important theme. Why? Because I think we close ourselves in a certain vision of tennis. And especially in an approach, mental approach, the fight, et cetera, and we have difficulty in going out of that.

We are trying more to force players into a model rather than to understand how players work and what would be best for them. This is a bit different in the other players you mentioned because their journeys are more personal.

So yes, for me it's mainly on that. So for me, it took a long time because it took me a long time to focus on that, to understand that the problems I had would not disappear miraculously and at some point I would have to work on them. I'm happy of the journey I had at the end, but when you start at 26 it's late. But after 10 years of working, I'm feeling well.

But my body is not feeling so well. But it's what has enabled me to withstand the pressure on matches here or in Roland Garros, whereas I have less weapons to be reassured physically, but because I have become better in this respect.

Q. In your career, we heard that you were boring to watch. Has this affected you or you don't care about that? When we ask other players, they talk about your cleverness of game and tactics. Are you proud of this recognition by your peers?

GILLES SIMON: I give more importance to the comments

of players and peers. Well, it's not exactly the same thing, actually. Again, as I have said, the spectators, it's thanks to them that we can live our passion. We play in the stadium. They come and pay the tickets. If they find the match boring, they have the right to say. They paid their ticket.

So if the film they watch is not appealing, they have the right to say so. It's the basics.

Then I have a game style which is peculiar. There are other players who have the same game style. When we play each other, it's like Andy, I shouldn't play Andy three times, I understand. But what is difficult is that when you play a match against Andy, there is a tactical dimension and a control that is huge but which is invisible because it's not impressive.

Well, the balls go to the right zones, they are slowed adequately, it's very difficult, and you need a great control, much more than just hitting very hard in rhythm that you can see, and that seems more impressive.

The ball goes out of the racquet, bam, bam, and then it touches the right zone, and it's a winner. It's easier to understand it's more spectacular. So it's logical.

We're not going to ask if I played Daniil, if I play Manna, you'll be bored, that's true. But for me, as a player, it's not less interesting. But I totally understand, and I always said so.

When people said, Oh, Jo has the most spectacular game and he serves at 220, he does a smash and the ball goes very high, I'm very impressed, no problem. But I'm not able to do the same. I can try, but it's less effective.

So yes, it's in this respect that I attach a lot of importance to what the crowd says, but not regarding their knowledge of the game and the fact of understanding what will happen on the court.

At that level, I more trust the other players who are in their lockers and who understand the constraints and difficulties of being able to play this or that type of game.

Q. Can you tell us a few words about Felix. It's someone you appreciate and it's reciprocal. I saw you both in Marseilles three years ago when you were teasing him in the players' room. There is affection between both of you. What do you like with this player, and with this young guy who has grown up?

GILLES SIMON: I think it's someone who has a fantastic attitude on the court and outside the court. He says

nothing on the court. He has a great attitude. He's full of will. He's always fighting for it.

He started very early. He beat a lot of records of youth. I think he was in the top 30 at 9 or 10 years old (smiling)? No, actually.

But he's never unpolite. He says hello, bye-bye, It's a pleasure to play against you. Whereas maybe for you, well, you know how it works. When a player plays well, he's boasting he's gonna be the future No. 1 in the world. He says, No, I'm just fine. I'm going to climb gradually.

And I was able to talk with his staff, and I liked their approach. I find him very humble for someone who is so good, who is so early.

When he was asking me questions, I was having fun. It was at a point in time of my career, you talked about the book, where we were told, You shouldn't doubt, et cetera. And he was coming up with his doubts. He's 16, he's No. 30, he has been progressing like that since he was born.

He says, On my game at 5-4 when I serve for the set, I don't know how to play, my heart start beating faster, Rafa is taking time, I don't understand. So I found this fantastic. He was asking himself 1,000 questions about that.

When we would have said, Why do you doubt, you're a big bison, you just have to serve. That's why I say he's there, he sees there's a problem, he tries to solve it. He already has the right approach.

I know from that point onwards he will be very strong. He leaves nothing to chance. He knows where he's good, where he's not good, where he has to work. It's an approach full of humility for someone who is being told all day long that he's tall, beautiful, and strong, because that's what he is.

I love this contrast. I love what he has, this great balance between this trust and confidence and humility that enables him to say, Where can I improve, what can I work on, and how can I improve all the time.

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