

Nitto ATP Finals

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Rafael Nadal

Press Conference



R. NADAL/A. Rublev

6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. This tournament for many, many years was a three-out-of-five-set tournament, and now it is two-out-of-three, as are most of the tournaments around the world except for the majors. I'm wondering from you, at this point, should all tournaments go to two-out-of-three, and is it very hard to adjust to playing three-out-of-five when so much of the tour is two-out-of-three sets now?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I don't think so, no. I think is true that we changed that around 2007, if I'm not wrong, that in the Masters 1000s we changed that used to be the finals best-of-five and we changed it to best-of-three for an easier reason. That's for example like happened to me in Rome, twice in a row, that I played 5 hours 14 and 5 hours 10 minutes against Coria in 2005 and against Roger in 2006 I was not able to go to Hamburg the next week, no?

So when we have back-to-back weeks with Masters 1000, I think makes sense to change best-of-three, not best-of-five. That's the main reason why we change, no?

But, yeah, I am completely against to change that in the Grand Slams, no? We have a day off. I think best-of-five makes a difference on these tournaments, on the slams, and at the same time is part of the history of our sport, no?

So, I mean, winning Grand Slam, playing best-of-three demand to the player something else, no? Stronger mentally, stronger physically, be solid for such a long time and for such a long two weeks.

So I really believe that's the right thing to do.

Q. Looking forward to the next match, you're playing Dominic Thiem. You haven't met him since that Melbourne quarterfinal. How do you assess the way he's matured since then? Obviously winning the US

Open. What do you think of his performances, and does he have the edge, given that he won that last encounter?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, he's a great player. He's improving every year. He's a hard worker. Great guy, so I'm super happy for him to watch him win his first Grand Slam and he deserve. He's one of the guys on the tour that really deserves the success because he's a very hard worker, no?

So for me gonna be a tough one. Hopefully for him, too. I'm gonna try to be ready for it. Going to be a big challenge, but I really hope the victory of today help me for that match. And tomorrow I have a day off to practice, to keep working the way that I need, and I hope to be ready for it.

Q. We have seen in previous years that winning in straight sets can be very, very important when the final calculations are made. How pleased are you with that? How pleased especially were you with your serve tonight?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, yeah, thank you. Of course it's a positive start, but I have to play against Dominic and then Stefanos, so two of the toughest opponents that you can face, no?

So, I mean, it's important to start well, of course, for the confidence, because winning straight sets helps. And of course the serve tonight have been very important, no? I played solid with my serve. I didn't suffer much, and that helps to play more relaxed on the returns. That's what I did, no?

Happy the way I approached the match. Always first match is difficult, and Andrey played an amazing season. He's a great guy, too, so I wish him all the very best.

Q. On the point of rankings, you decided not to go to Sofia, so Novak ended up the year at No. 1. There is still a mathematical chance that Domi could move to No. 2, depending on the results of the ATP Finals. Do things like that concern you? Does it really matter for



you, to finish at No. 2 or No. 3?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I prefer to finish No. 2 than No. 3, but as you can feel, I said since a lot of years ago, no, I will not follow the ranking, playing more events or playing things that I think goes against my body, against my future to try to achieve a better ranking, no?

I know I have to play well when I have to play well. And if I am playing well there, that's gonna be my position on the ranking. If it's second, great. If it's first, better. If it's third, still a positive year, no?

So that's my approach, and that's the way that I see my calendar today. I have to be smart in terms of decide which goals are more important for me, and I think me and all my team we know very clear what's the most important things for my tennis career.

Q. How does the situation, corona, bubble, something else, affect you guys psychologically? Not going out, going for walk in the park, leave the head down for a while and something like that? Not even going to the arena by foot, only by transport?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I tell you one thing: The world is suffering a lot, so we are very lucky that we can play tennis. That's the real feeling that I have.

So is true that it's more boring and a little bit tougher mentally than normal because you can't be with the family, you can't be going out for dinner and distract a little bit of the routine, but I repeat I can't complain and we can't complain at all.

The only thing that we can say is thanks to life that we can keep doing our job, and thanks that we have a great organization and a great tour behind us. Grand Slams, ATP, Masters 1000s, they are working hard, and a lot of them losing money to keep running the tour.

So they are making big efforts. From the player perspective, the only thing we can say is thanks.

Q. I'd like to know if you had the chance to talk for enough time with Djokovic about this PTPA or note if in a way you think that he's trying to help the players doing what he does and what he's suggesting? He seemed to be a bit disappointed that you and Roger didn't understand in his opinion what he was trying to bring up.

RAFAEL NADAL: No, I didn't speak to him about this. I practiced with him the other day, but no, no, didn't talk about this situation.

They know my opinion, but I tell you one thing, not because they are creating this organization they are trying to help more the rest of the players than us, that we believe in this structure, no? If we are in the situation that we are today is because not me and Roger but Novak included and Andy and the top players went to the tour and asked for what the other players we really think they deserved.

So if we compare the tour today through five, six, seven, eight years ago, the improvement in terms of the income that the lower-ranked players have are significantly higher, no? And that's not mean that we are not trying to keep helping and to keep promoting the idea that if more players are able to survive from our sport, our sport gonna be bigger, of course yes, and of course we are talking about what we can do to try to make that happen, but we believe that we don't need to create another organization to make that happen.

That's all. But the idea is not different; the approach is completely different.

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