

Nitto ATP Finals

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London, England, UK

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/D. Schwartzman

6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Before 2008 this tournament was a three-out-of-five-set tournament, and since then obviously it's two-out-of-three, as are the Masters 1000s. Do you think this leaves players unprepared for playing three-out-of-five at the majors? And is it time to go two-out-of-three everywhere? Or would you rather see more three-out-of-fives?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I am more a proponent of two-out-of-three everywhere, even though of course slams have always been best-of-five. So obviously it's historically been that way, so I don't know whether there is a chance at all for it to change. Yes, I am more of a proponent of best-of-three sets everywhere.

You asked me why. I just feel that we have enough tournaments, enough matches during the year. We have the longest season of all sports, any sport in the world. Tennis has the longest season from January 1 to end of November. Literally every single week you have tournament somewhere.

I don't see a reason why we should play best-of-five, even though of course there is a historical reason and it has been always that way, so it's a tradition.

But I just, yeah, I don't know, I just feel like the attention span as well of the fans, especially the younger generation, is shorter. So in order for us to really improve the product, so to say, of tennis, you know, I think commercially and marketing-wise I feel like we have to adapt to that younger generation.

Unfortunately we had a stat that was a bit shocking, and the research that was done and the study that was done of the average age of a tennis fan worldwide is 61. Yeah, I mean, I think we have to change something, in my opinion. Obviously we have been one of those sports that has

stuck with the tradition a lot, which I respect, and I feel like this is something we have to keep, but at the same time we haven't been really exploring, you know, some changes, whether it's score or, you know, less sets or whatever, different calendar, just different point system, whatever it is. We have not really looked into that.

Every time someone mentions that, I feel like there is not much of a support, not much of a willingness to really address that and strategically think about the things that could attract younger audience as well to our tour, to our sport.

Q. Can you elaborate please on the strangeness of having no crowd here at the O2? And why did you celebrate to the empty stands like you normally did? I thought you might skip that because there are no fans here.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, it was very strange, to say the least. I mean, it felt like a practice session, in a way.

But of course chair umpire calling the score, you already feel you're part of the official match. My mindset hasn't changed much in terms of my approach to the match and what I need to do and how I focus.

But I do miss the crowd. I think that's one of the most important aspects of professional tennis of why we play this game and why we travel so much.

You know, hopefully this is only temporary. It's unfortunate that there is no crowd in the O2 Arena for the last year of the ATP Finals here. This has been one of the most exciting arenas to play for a tennis player. The atmosphere was always electric, and the crowd was always loud and really into matches.

It's unfortunate. I really miss them, of course probably as anybody else.

Why I celebrated? Because that's my celebration. I mean, that's my also gratitude to the court and to this opportunity to be able to compete. You know, even though it might sound like a phrase, but I try to remind myself that don't



take things for granted, and that's kind of one of the routines that reminds me of the things that I have to be aware of.

So even though there was no crowd in stands, I know there was a lot of people watching it on TV, so that was me sharing that emotion with them.

Q. A good win for you today. It was also Diego's first match in the Finals. When you came to this tournament when it was known as the Masters Cup, you also lost your first match. What does it take to bounce back in a tournament like this?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes, you're right. Back in 2007 was my debut in Shanghai, and I lost all three matches actually in the group.

Yeah, I know how that feels. Obviously you had also some examples of like Dimitrov and Tsitsipas that won on their debuts, they won the titles, which was also very, very impressive.

Well, I think the format allows you really, even though you lose a match, to still have a chance to qualify for semis, and you have plenty of motivation in terms of points, in terms of financial incentive. Obviously every match that you win you get to win 200 points, which is almost as winning a 250 event.

So I think there is, as I said, there is plenty of motivation for Diego. I'm sure that he wants to try to play better than he did today. Yeah, let's see how that goes.

Q. Can we talk about the upcoming Australian Open? Because overnight there was a statement from the Victorian Premier who was casting little bit of doubt on whether it was, in his words, "a done deal" that the tournament would go ahead as planned. I wonder, how much have you been in touch with Craig? Are you keeping an eye on developments? Planning for when you leave must be on your mind.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Absolutely, yeah. Yeah, we are following it closely. Yes, I have been in touch with Craig, with Andre Sa, as well, that works with Tennis Australia. We are trying to get information.

I think they have been terrific in communicating and representing players and trying to fight for best possible conditions that could be available to us under the circumstances.

I have not seen the latest statement of the Australian prime minister, but from what I have heard and what I know of the

latest news from Tennis Australia is that the Australian Open and the rest of the tournaments will be held in Victoria state, mostly Melbourne and around Melbourne. I saw the WTA came out with a calendar, as well.

I have not noticed much of a doubt whether the tournaments will happen or not. That's obviously from my point of view seeing what is happening, that there was no doubt that the tournaments will happen, so they will happen.

There is going to be quarantine of 14 days. But obviously we still don't know whether we choose where we do quarantine or we have to follow the designated places or resorts or hotels or whatever it is where we do this quarantine.

It is challenging, I must say. We don't know whether ATP Cup is happening. We heard some rumors there might be eight teams only. Well, in that case if that happens, maybe then, you know, obviously ATP should try to do another 250 event or -- I mean, it's not easy for anybody, really.

Obviously you want things to be ideal, but what is ideal in these circumstances? We really don't know. So I think it's out of our reach.

Also Tennis Australia has to follow what Australian government is regulating and proposing them to do. So, yeah, we just have to wait and see, I guess. I don't know.

I hope that it will happen. I want to play in Australia, Australian Open. I'm not sure about the ATP Cup and the tournaments before, because obviously you have to leave quite in advance, actually, I think two-and-a-half or three weeks prior to the first match.

So let's see how that goes. But I'm just hoping for the sake of tennis and sake of players that we will have Australian Open and also possibility of ATP Cup and couple more tournaments at least.

Q. Following on from that, the schedule overall next year, do you think at the moment there is a lot of uncertainty about it? Do you think the players should expect a very different schedule next year? Normally after Australia, you choose to play in Europe, you go to South America. How is it looking at the moment, do you think?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, as far as I know, there are ongoing board meetings here in the next three days where they will decide on the first couple of months of the calendar for 2021, and then they will, I guess in Australia, they will decide for the rest of the season, they will see how

everything unfolds.

I heard that the Middle East tournaments are going to happen. I mean, I sincerely hope everything will happen as normal, so to say, as we are used to in terms of scheduling. But probably what we will have to expect is to play with less crowd or maybe no crowd at all, at least for the next couple of months.

I mean, I would be surprised, and of course I would wish that, that we have a full capacity of crowd in the first two, three months of the year, but I would be surprised if that happens.

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