

Nitto ATP Finals

Saturday, 21 November 2020

London, England, UK

Dominic Thiem

Press Conference



D. THIEM/N. Djokovic

7-5, 6-7, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I'm sure you have always believed in yourself, but it feels like this year in the big moments against the big players during matches you really do believe in going for the shots and you believe in yourself. Do you feel a difference in your mindset on court this year?

DOMINIC THIEM: Not really. I mean, I kind of almost believed in myself, and honestly also have to say that today I got a little bit lucky at the end in the third-set tiebreak. I mean, of course it's amazing. I won two against Rafa, I won the deciding today against Nole, the tiebreak. But still, I mean, it's so much on the edge.

From 0-4 in the third-set tiebreak I went for every single shot and every single shot went in. I mean, it was amazing, and it's not gonna be like that in every match I play.

Of course I'm super happy that it worked out today, but it's not gonna be like that in every match. I know that. I'm just super happy that in such an important match like the semifinals of the Nitto ATP Finals it worked out like that.

Today, for example, in the second-set tiebreak, I was mentally not that strong. I got so tight when I had two match points on my own serve. The first one was a double fault. I was like so tight in my whole body. Then the second, as well.

So it's always like kind of so close, these matches, that, well, at the end, the one who was a little bit luckier ends up winning.

Q. Just to take you back to the tiebreaks, I remember at Roland Garros, somebody asked you about how good you have been in tiebreaks and you said that you have studied Novak because he's so consistent in tiebreaks. Did that play a factor when you were

playing a tiebreak against him and how you came through those?

DOMINIC THIEM: Yeah, I took him as an example, because he has won so many important tiebreaks in his career. I have the feeling that when he's going into the tiebreaker, he just refuses to miss.

That's what I tried to do as well, especially from the restart of the tour. I tried to do that and it works out super well.

But still you always need a little bit of luck in the tiebreak against any opponent, and lately the luck is definitely on my side.

But today I was very, very close to lose the third-set tiebreaker, and at the end it's always gonna be balanced, no? Last year, for example, I beat Novak in the group stage 7-6 in the third. I lost the final 7-6 in the third.

Especially in this tournament and in the deep stages of the slams, it's like the one who has the better or luckier day ends up winning, and it was today the same.

I mean, the way I went for my shots from 0-4 down in the third-set tiebreak, it's not gonna work out every day like that. Just super happy that today in the important and big semifinals it worked out.

Q. You're the only second player who has five wins against Novak, Rafa, and Roger each. How that affects your confidence now?

DOMINIC THIEM: Yeah, that is super special to me. I mean, some things are super special about today's victory. It was my 300th tour-level win, which is amazing to me.

And then to beat every single of the three best players of all time five times each, it's something great for me. Super nice statistics.

But still, as I said after the match against Rafa, every single match against them is a huge privilege. It's a huge opportunity to learn. Of course if you beat these guys, it gives you a huge boost of confidence.



Q. Can you just explain what it felt like when that last point finished? Just also talk about the tension in this match, especially that third-set tiebreak and having not converted the four match points in the second set. If you could just explain about those situations.

DOMINIC THIEM: Yeah, I mean, in the second-set tiebreak I experienced that. What I said about US Open title that maybe makes me a little bit more calm in tough situations, it was a mistake for myself to think that way, because I got so tight and nervous in those especially two match points where I served.

The first one it was completely obvious that I'm gonna serve a double fault because I was so tight. And also the other ones.

Thoughts the end of the third set? Honestly, I knew already this was an epic match, and that's the brutal thing in tennis is that there is only one winner. I mean, even if I would have lost that match 5-7 or 6-7 in the third, I wouldn't be disappointed, because, I mean, I was really fighting from the first to the last point. I think we had some great, great rallies.

I knew that, well, the last-set tiebreak was 50/50. I was in a very tough situation at 0-4 down, and then I just went for the shots and everything went in, which is of course amazing.

Q. I think that you played better, that you deserved to win. That's my opinion. Because you were taking initiative all the time, leading the game, and you should have won in two sets instead of three. But anyway, once you have beaten 15 times the top three guys, do you consider yourself potential "fab"? We are always calling Fab Four, Fab Three. Are you one of the "fab" now?

DOMINIC THIEM: No, of course not. I mean, if you compare especially the big titles, I'm so far away. I have one slam, one Masters 1000, and that's it. That's a little bit less than the other three players (smiling).

But I love to play against them. As I said, it's such a huge thing every single match against them. We younger players can feel super happy that these three living legends are still around and we can compete with them. Every match against them is a great opportunity. That's what I think about it.

Q. A lot of people speak about your power, but how important is your backhand slice? Because in the tiebreak and coming back, the point that you got back

on serve you sort of baited him to miss into the net, and at 5-All you used it to neutralize the point and then you hit your backhand winner. Just curious what you think about that.

DOMINIC THIEM: It's definitely my most important shots in my game. I love to use the slice, and I mean, on all surfaces actually. But here the bounce is pretty low. It's a fast surface, so it's a great, great option, especially to get from a defense position into a neutral position again.

It helped me out great today. I think it was 3-4 and 4-4, one time amazing slice, crosscourt one time, a great one down the line, which is such an important shot in my game.

I think I improved it and I practiced it a lot, as well, because as I said, if it wouldn't be there, I think a big part of my game would be missing.

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