

# Nitto ATP Finals

Monday, 15 November 2021

Turin, Italy

Pala Alpitour, Torino

## Casper Ruud

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/C. Ruud

7-6, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

**Q. I just wanted to hear your thoughts on the match. Obviously the first set was very high quality. That first game especially, two forehand winners, a tweener, Novak fell. It was already so eventful from the start. I wanted to know how it felt on the court and what's your takeaways overall?**

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, no, I think it was a very fun and exciting first set. Was some fun rallies and some good rallies. Honestly I think I have seen Novak play better than he did in the first set, and I have also felt better on the court than the first set, but we still managed to produce some good tennis.

It's not always easy. It was the first match. I'm sure he was a bit nervous. I don't know. But I was also a bit nervous. It's the first time for me on this stage, but I think I had a good start. Obviously I broke him the first game and followed up with holding my serve, but a little bit of a sloppy game at 3-2, and then, you know, he's back, he's always there.

It's tough, because he reads the game very well. He's always kind of positioning himself very, very well. Even though you feel like you have an easy ball and that you should put it away, he always gets there because he's very quick obviously, but also because he reads the game well. Some crucial points, he usually steps up, and that's why he's No. 1 in the world.

You could see it again today. I had 4-3 in the tiebreak, not the biggest chance in my life, but, you know, still some chances here and there. Then he steps up and plays four very good points. That pretty much sums up the first set.

The second set, a little bit unfortunate in the beginning because, you know, I started fresh and feeling, you know, I

cannot relax more, but the first set was done. I started with two good points, and then for four points, I just threw away a little bit so he got the break right away. Obviously he has the experience and the level to step up when he needs to.

The second set was not as exciting as the first, but still, I think it was a good first match for me to get a feeling of the court, the environment, and the next two matches will be interesting I think for me.

**Q. I was just wondering, so much is made of the difference in speed between the training and practice courts and the court that you played on today. Is it really like that? How fast is the court? Do you have any comparison?**

CASPER RUUD: Well, it's tough to say, because on hard court I feel that every tournament is a bit different, and also depends a little bit on the balls. What it comes down to for me I think is how much friction they put in the painting, how much kind of the ball will grip the surface.

Here it's fairly like slippery. The ball slides off quite well, but at least when the balls are new and then when the balls are a bit more used it's a bit slower. Overall a quite fast court, I would say. You can see it on the serves especially, because I'm not usually, you know, the guy to serve too many aces, but today I think I had nine maybe aces against Djokovic, who was returning very well, and he had also many aces.

I think serve is a very important shot here when it's a court like this, and it's tough to kind of get a very, very good feeling of the court when it's this fast. It's one of the faster courts of the year, I think, but that's how it is. It's okay. I obviously wish it was a bit slower, I can honestly say, but in the end it's the same for my opponent.

It's always fun with some change, because if you play on the surface when it's always the same speed, it can get a bit, you know, boring in the end. It's the same on clay. Some clay courts are faster than others. You have Madrid, which is faster, and Munich, with altitude, is a bit faster. Then you have the slower courts again. It's always good with a change, and here it's fairly fast, I would say.

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**Q. In your first answer you made a comment about being a bit nervous going into the match. What happens when you get nervous? What are the signs? What do you feel?**

CASPER RUUD: Well, I think, you know, sometimes when you are playing one of the bigger matches of your career, you can feel nervous even the day before. Yesterday I didn't really feel too nervous, or today either, but when you walk on the stage, it does something to you. Just the fact you're coming in a tunnel, you have the fancy light, you have the music, you feel like everyone is watching you. It can get a bit, so to say, intimidating in a way.

I know that all the fans are here to watch a tennis match and I'm a part of it, so it cools down after some games. It's just, you know, getting the body ready and getting the body used to kind of playing points.

I think what it does is that it, in a way, stresses you but also makes you a bit more stiff like in your footwork. It doesn't flow as easy as it maybe usually does or in practice. You start doubting a little bit sometimes the shots here and there. So you do more mistakes than I think in practice when you're not feeling too many nerves.

That's the normal thing. You get a little bit, you know, tight. Your arm can feel heavy, all these things that the nerves does to your body.

But for me, I don't mind feeling nervous, because the nerves come from many years ago when, you know, people were going into war, the adrenaline was pumping and it shows that your body is getting ready for war, in a way. It comes from many, many years ago. Obviously we're not at war. We don't hope that will ever happen, at least, you know, around the world, but tennis, a tennis match can be, it shows that it means something for you and gets the adrenaline going.

I think it's a positive way for me. Even though it's nicer not to feel nervous, it's a way of my body showing, oh, this really means something and I'm getting ready for a match. So it is a good thing, but obviously it can also be a challenge for many.

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