

Nitto ATP Finals

Monday, 15 November 2021

Turin, Italy

Pala Alpitour, Torino

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/C. Ruud

7-6, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English, please.

Q. Your comments in Italian on the court, I don't speak Italian, but they caused somewhat of a frenzy on social media because people interpreted you only want to play for another two years? Can you clarify? Do you really plan to retire after two years?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, no, (laughter). I didn't mean it that way. "Paio d'anni" means couple of years. I said "couple," meaning -- I don't know. I thought couple of years playing at the highest level, why not? I mean, it would be great.

Look, I don't have a number in my mind, you know, of the years I still want to play at this level. I don't have a limit. I don't want to impose a limit to myself at all, because I still enjoy playing tennis, and I really enjoy competition and playing at the highest level. Being No. 1 in the world, there is no reason for me yet to think about leaving tennis. You know, I really am in a good place at the moment.

So I'm sorry if someone misinterpreted that.

Q. After the match you lifted the year-end No. 1 ATP trophy on court. How does that feel and how does it feel to be No. 1 in the end for the seventh time?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Feels amazing, and obviously feels even better when you win a match and you get your hands on that trophy that I have been blessed to lift for seven times now in my career, one more than Pete Sampras, who was my childhood hero. He was the one that got me going with tennis.

You know, the first time I watched a tennis match was -- I have said this before -- it was his Wimbledon finals, I think '91 or '92, and, you know, he always was an inspiration to me and kind of dreamt of being a Wimbledon champion

and No. 1 in the world like he is. Kind of fast-forward to today, it's amazing to be in this position. I'm very grateful.

But at the same time, it's very difficult for me to reflect fully on it while being active and while being in the tournament. But certainly it's something that I am very much appreciating and not taking for granted.

Q. Just on the misunderstanding of the retirement aspect, and don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to push you into retirement by any means, but when it did come to that, what do you think would determine you the time would be to hang up racquets?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I take care of my body along with my team pretty well, so I believe it won't be for the injury actually, I hope it won't be for that, that it will come on my own terms, whenever that moment arrives, that I'll be very clear with myself that that's it, you know, that that chapter of my life is done, that I can move on.

But I just don't feel that's around the corner, so to say. I still feel like I have years in my legs and in my heart and in my head. As long as that's the case, I'll keep going, because I truly love the sport and I enjoy the competition, because it keeps me going, challenges me, motivates me, and that's essential ingredients, so to say, for me to still keep on playing, because otherwise it will be very difficult to get up more or less every single day and train hard in order to stay at that highest level and compete for the biggest titles in sport and biggest achievements.

Q. I wondered if you followed the bizarre and alarming story about Peng Shuai, and the two tours have made statements now saying that this should be an investigation as to why she hasn't been heard from. Wondered if you have any thoughts on it?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I don't have much information about it. I did hear about it a week ago. Honestly, it's shocking, you know, that she's missing, more so that it's someone that I have seen on the tour in the previous years quite a few times.

It's not much more to say than hope that she will be found,



that she's okay. It's terrible that, you know, I can imagine just how her family feels, you know, that she's missing.

Q. Can you tell me a bit about what went through your head in the first set? It was a really tight set, and you lost your first serve game. Were you nervous, or was there something else?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Honestly, I don't know what happened in that breakpoint in the first game. You know, I took a fall, you know, tripped on my own legs a couple of times, so it was really a terrible start, but also funny that I'm still trying to figure out what happened.

But again, Casper started strong. He was hitting solid, especially from the forehand side. He was serving very well. You know, altitudes, fast court, fast balls, it favors big servers. Casper, I knew he has a solid serve, but, you know, probably not as good as maybe Medvedev, Zverev, and these guys. So, you know, I must say that he did positively surprise me with his serving today, which was also quite a high percentage, particularly in the first set and he was hitting his spots.

I just kind of managed to read his serve better in the second set. It was a close one. He was 3-2 up in the tiebreaker and was serving, and he missed the first serve by very little, you know, to go up 4-2.

Anything can happen if you lose or drop the first set. The momentum shifted to my side when I managed to have a very strong last three, four points of the tiebreaker, and then I was kind of on the roll and I felt that, you know, momentum shifted to my side, and then I was serving extremely well.

He played a poor game in the first game of the second set, and that's when I felt like it's a big opportunity for me to get an upper hand and to stay in the lead, which I did.

Q. I would like to ask you about Carlos Alcaraz, about what do you think what he has done in this year and what he can do in the future.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: What he has achieved this year is impressive and it's historic. I think he's one of the youngest players ever to make this kind of success, like his idol, Rafa, that he obviously looks up to. He's so young and already, you know, top-30 player, winning a NextGen, beating Korda and beating some really good players, as well, and showing great maturity for an 18-year-old.

It's very impressive, very impressive the way he's playing, the way he's behaving as well off the court. Has a very nice personality, gets along very well, he's very kind. He's

got a legend of our sport as a coach, Juan Carlos Ferrero, who is known also to be a very intelligent guy on and off the court, someone that has been in the shoes of No. 1 in the world, winning Grand Slams. He understands what it takes for a young player to reach the highest level in tennis.

So everything has been working perfectly so far for him, and I wish him all the best, because he's definitely great for Spanish tennis and great for tennis in general.

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