

# Nitto ATP Finals

Friday, 19 November 2021

Turin, Italy

Pala Alpitour, Torino

## Casper Ruud

Press Conference



C. RUUD/A. Rublev

2-6, 7-5, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Just explain how excited you are with what you've achieved in your debut outing at the Nitto ATP Finals. Do you think, irrespective of what happens, that you should be regarded as the greatest player ever to come from Norway?**

CASPER RUUD: Well, I don't think I know. I'm very excited. It was quite a way to finish a match. I think the tiebreak was probably some of the best tennis we played because there were some rallies, some good winners. In the end to be able to serve an ace was a relief because you are a little bit tight and nervous on these big points.

It was 5-3. I played a good forehand. Hit the net, then went over. I felt like, Wow, maybe if this is the way it will turn around it will be tough.

It was a great kind of feeling and relief when I served the ace on the match point. Since it's been obviously great season. But also after this press conference I will try to go into the sauna to be ready for tomorrow.

It's a new match. This is probably one of the toughest challenges with this sport: the better you do, the tougher it will get, you will play more and more matches against tougher players.

This is a first-time experience for me to play the semifinals here in the Nitto ATP Finals. I'm looking forward to it. I hope I can deliver a good match.

**Q. Since you lost the five-setters at Roland Garros and Wimbledon, you haven't lost a deciding set. You won 11 in a row. I want to know if you know that.**

CASPER RUUD: I didn't know.

**Q. Why do you think you're doing so well in three-setters or deciding sets at the moment?**

CASPER RUUD: I think what you asked, it stings a lot to lose deciding sets in a Grand Slam. It's probably the worst loss we have in our sport to lose a three-setter or five-setter. It's something that really stings.

It's not like I told myself I'm never going to lose a deciding setter again because I will have to accept that I will do for the coming years. But since then all the margins have kind of gone my favor. It's a good streak to have, even a match where I saved match points to turn it around and win in the end.

It's been some really close matches that have gone my way. I'm just really happy about it and hope this streak can continue for more matches.

I think something that really gave me motivation was the loss in Roland Garros. Even though it was tough at the time, it gave me motivation to kind of seek somewhat of a revenge.

Especially when I came back to the clay after Wimbledon, I was ready to kind of -- I was thinking, I'm not done with this surface yet for this year, I will have my revenge, get some good wins before the clay season is officially over on the tour. That was my mentality when I won those three tournaments in a row.

Here this week I've just thought that every point is important, matters, because it goes so fast here, the games can go by fast. If you serve well, it's tough for your opponent to do anything. On big points today I was both playing and serving well.

**Q. Speaking of your serve, Novak said after your match with him this week that you surprised him a bit with your serving. Has your serving exceeded your expectations this week?**

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, maybe a little bit. Today I think my best maybe service day was against Cameron, not maybe the start, but the way I kind of served the second



and third set was almost exceptional for my standards.

I didn't feel that great with the serve today. It got better towards the end. In the end I was able to finish the match with an ace, so I'm very thankful for that.

I have been working on it since Paris because I knew that serving here would be very important. Even when we got here, knowing the courts were so fast, in practice it was tough to return. I knew that serve would be a key shot here in Turin.

**Q. A bit of a silly question. I know you're a Liverpool fan.**

CASPER RUUD: Yeah.

**Q. How did you become a Liverpool fan? Do you think Mo Salah is the best player in the world at the moment?**

CASPER RUUD: Well, that's a good question.

It's quite simple really. I am not following all soccer matches fully, to be honest. I'm not like a diehard, diehard football fan or soccer fan.

But my team is Liverpool because when I was 10 years old I went to Liverpool to play a junior tournament with a Norwegian guy who arranged it to play against other British players on grass. It was the first time I ever played on grass. Then he took us to the stadium. I bought the jersey of Fernando Torres when he played in the team many years ago now.

From then it's just been natural for me to support them. Before Klopp arrived, there were some tough years. Since the arrival of Klopp, he has turned things around and it's fun years to be a Liverpool supporter. It's a great team. They play great football.

If you ask me, I think the last month or two maybe Salah has been the best player in the world, yes.

**Q. Not bad for the first Norwegian ever to come to the ATP Finals and reach immediately the semifinals.**

CASPER RUUD: Thank you.

**Q. You say you're going to take a sauna later on. Normally the Italians, the Latins, they go in the freezing ice. You come from the north, the North Pole, you go to the sauna. Is that the reason? You have to try against your nature? Also, did you see Medvedev last night versus Sinner? Did you see what he was doing**

**in the third set? He almost seemed to quit the match, then instead he started to play again. He was serving 200 kilometer per hour the second serve. Comment on that and what you expect tomorrow.**

CASPER RUUD: Well, I think, yeah, a lot of guys from the north, they like to do the sauna. I think sauna comes from Finland, not maybe from Norway. But it's a nice thing.

I am from the north, but I'm not a fan of the cold. I always try to escape the winter. Luckily the tour is played in the warmer places during the winter.

But it's always nice to come home to cold, white Christmas. I think it has a charm, especially in Norway. We have snow, it's all white and beautiful. I guess that's an answer.

When it comes to Medvedev, I was watching not the end because then I was sleeping, I was getting ready for this match. But I watched this morning some highlights of the match.

I actually watched until it was 6-0. Medvedev was playing unbelievable. Then I went to sleep. I woke up and saw it was an incredible match. I wish I had stayed up to watch longer.

I saw, yeah, some gestures he was doing or some things he was doing on the court. Maybe it's a little bit typical him. You always have to expect some crazy things coming from him. It's happened before. It's nothing new.

Tomorrow, of course, I hope I can have the crowd a little bit on my side because I'm playing the No. 2 player in the world. Some support will be obviously appreciated. I think it could be a good thing for me to have the people in my back. I will just try to fight and run until I'm too tired to run. Hope I can deliver a good match.

I have lost to him two times before, so I have to come up with a better game plan tomorrow.

**Q. Were you surprised by Sinner's performance? What do you think about him even if you saw only the highlights?**

CASPER RUUD: I'm not surprised about Sinner playing very well. I played against him this year in Vienna. I think it was it was a very, very good match from him. I think also I played quite well in the first set at least. It was close. He was playing with high confidence after his victory in Antwerp.

I was more surprised honestly when he lost to Tiafoe and Alcaraz because I was expecting him to maybe pass me in

the race, he would make it here. In the end he did. I was happy he was able to play two matches and he was great. I think he deserved the chance to play here. It was also in a way nice for the Italians that he replaced another Italian.

Unfortunately, of course, Matteo had to withdraw, but Sinner had the chance. He took care of the chance. Unluckily he lost yesterday with match points, but I am sure he is proud of his season. I'm sure we will see him more next year.

**Q. What do you have to do specifically? What's the most important thing you need to do against Daniil? Do you consider the two previous matches you played against him? You haven't won a set. If you could please address that.**

CASPER RUUD: I think I will go tonight to look a little bit on his matchups against myself obviously and also maybe a player like Thiem, Dominic, who has beaten him before, see what Dominic has been doing well. I'm not going to say I play similar to Dominic, but also we play with quite a bit of topspin from the forehand. I think both we prefer to play the heavier shots with a lot of spin. Dominic has a potential to play fast also and he has a good slice, unbelievable forehand, all these things. I will be interested to see a little bit what he has done to Medvedev before.

Any player that can beat him, it will be interesting to watch a match to see how they do it because he's playing really well at the moment. The last two, three years, he has shown everyone that he belongs here on top of the world. Tomorrow it will be my task to try to surprise him and try to beat him in the end. It's as simple as that.

It will obviously be tough. He's a great player, especially here on hard court indoor. He also has struggled a little bit. I think he's played three sets all his matches. I don't think he has been flawless yet. Even though he won all the three matches, he has had some struggles here and there. Hopefully I can find some ways to force some errors from his racquet.

**Q. In the videos that the ATP asked you to do where you were describing each other, the players, Novak used the word 'kind' to describe you. In the beginning of the tournament, Rublev spent a good five minutes speaking about how much he admires you, how you are well-mannered, you always say the right thing. You haven't been on tour that long. What does it mean to you to have your fellow top 10 peers speak that way about you?**

CASPER RUUD: It's nice. Of course, I always try to be a nice guy, even though I win or lose. I think that's a big

value that my family has raised me to think about. Of course, I can show some frustration on the court, but I think it's always nice to try to stay calm and be a nice, down-to-earth guy. It's important values to me.

I've said to myself when I started on tour that I will try to go my full career without maybe breaking a racquet on tour. I can only name one player of the top 10 who has done that, and it's Nadal. Federer also has been exceptional, except one time in Miami that he broke the racquet. Those two guys have been exceptional in their behavior.

Of course, it's also allowed to show emotion. I'm not saying everyone should be stone-faced or not do anything. That's not the values I stand for.

It's funny because when you look at the tennis match, people are winning, they are always smiling, it's going to be fine, behaving well. I think many times on the tennis court when things don't go as well as you hope, I think many players show who they really are, start breaking racquets, they can get very angry. My goal is not to do this. I will try to go for the next years without doing it and hope I can stay to this mentality.

It's nice, of course, that the other players can see that I am trying to be a nice guy. Even if I win or lose, I always try to be respectful, nice to my opponents.

**Q. You mentioned Rafa. You spent some time at the Nadal academy, spent time with him on the golf course. Besides what you just mentioned, what are some of the things - having interacted closely with him - perhaps you either aspire to emulate or you're inspired by in general?**

CASPER RUUD: I think his whole character is inspiring. He's very, very competitive. Doesn't matter if it's tennis, golf, he's a competitive guy. Somewhat he has two personalities, one on court where he's the fierce-ful, tough guys that plays with a lot of intensity. You always will see him nice to his opponents and respectful. Then you have him off court where he's a very, very normal, very nice guy. Always says hi.

Whenever he's around in Mallorca in the academy, everyone treats him like a normal person because they're kind of used to him there. I think he enjoys that. I probably would if I was in his position. It's nice to see he's a very, very normal guy at least in the circumstances when he's at home in Mallorca.

It's been fun to hang around him both on the golf and tennis court, yes.

