

Nitto ATP Finals

Wednesday, 16 November 2022

Turin, Italy

Pala Alpitour, Torino

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/A. Rublev

6-4, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, you are through to the semis. Two straight-set victories so far. A perfect week for you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes, I mean, one of the best matches I played this year, particularly in the second set. Just a flawless set really.

I started off really sharp in the match, served extremely well. I had a lot of free points on the first serve. I think that helps particularly in these conditions against a very dynamic, quality player that is Rublev.

Just managed to find I guess the right returns, the right play in those moments. Was a bit more patient than him in the 10th game of the first set to close the set. A great backhand-down-the-line winner return of his first serve.

He went down a bit. I found the momentum kind of shifted to my side. I just felt that the first few games of the second set will be key. I managed to break him right away. After that, everything was flowing fantastically well.

I'm really glad to be through to the semis, which is of course a positive news and a relief coming into the last match of the group.

At the same time I want to win that match, win every match that I play here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. If you don't mind, I need to ask you about the Australian government situation. How excited are you about the decision that's been made, your thoughts? You looked so relaxed today. Was that also a legacy of having that burden off your shoulders?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, of course, I was very happy to

receive the news yesterday. Yeah, it was a relief obviously knowing what I and people closest to me in my life have been through this year with what happened in Australia and post Australia obviously. I could not receive better news for sure - during this tournament as well.

Did it affect my game today? I would like to believe it did. Why not? I don't think it did affect me too much because I'm familiar with what I need to do in order to prepare myself for every match.

Of course, knowing that I have clarity now, what I do in the off-season, starting the season in Australia, also of course did relieve some of the pressure me and my team felt. Just giving that clarity makes it great for us.

Australian Open has been my most successful Grand Slam. I made some of the best memories there. Of course, I want to go back there, I want to play tennis, do what I do best, hopefully have a great Australian summer.

Q. I know you wouldn't have written the script this way, but do you feel as fresh at this time of year - unfortunately - as you ever have? Related to that, what did you do during July and August when you didn't have clarity in order to remain sharp and find that balance between being fresh but also being sharp that seems to be evident in the last few weeks of tennis that you're playing?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: The upside of not playing many tournaments is that you're going to be fresher than when you're playing a lot more, which is logical. At the same time it was a very unusual year for me in terms of my season. I missed some big tournaments, two out of four slams.

To be able to play as well I am playing in the last few months is something I'm very thankful for and I worked hard for because I had more time to train, to practice. I did spend quite a bit of time with my coach and with my team on the court, off the court, trying to perfect my game.

Sometimes I do wish, in the pro men's tennis season, we have a bit more time to really have kind of those training



blocks to be a bit longer so you can really work on your game and your body, which I think is quite important.

At the same time I understand there's a lot of players that want to play more, that have more opportunities, more tournaments, so I get it.

I'm also at the position I think now in my career where I'm able to choose which tournaments I play and where I want to peak, at what time of the season. Hopefully the next season will be back to normal in a way where I'm able to play most of the places where I want to go and play.

Q. Not too bad today because you had great news for Australia, then Boris Becker is coming out of the prison before Christmas.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: He is?

Q. Yes. This is a new thing.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: For good or...

Q. Yeah, there is a rule that says if you are a foreigner, you live in England, since the prisons are full, you can have a chance to go out, to join the family, in Christmastime.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Then he has to come back?

Q. No. He's going back to Germany is what has been said.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I mean, that's very good news. I'm really glad for Boris, yeah.

Are you coming to Australia? We can have a not-too-bad Australia II?

Q. Depends. Good news Australia. Good news Boris Becker. Good news you are in the semifinal. What about the news that Carlos Alcaraz is No. 1 in the world? Maybe you had a chance to be No. 1 in the world again if you could play all those tournaments you didn't play.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It's also good news for him (laughter).

He deserves it. No doubt about it. I don't want to go into discussion what if I played less or more, whatever. It is what it is. Reality is that he's No. 1. He deserves to be there. He won a slam. He won many matches in tournaments.

He's I think a great new face and a player for our sport. He's a very nice guy. Works very hard. Has a good team of people around him. Represents himself and tennis in a good way. I find only the positive things to say about him.

As far as my season, as I was referring to a little while ago, it was a very unusual season for me. Obviously I missed a lot of big tournaments.

But I can say I learned a lot this year about myself, about the world that I live in, and about some people as well who have behaved in a certain way to me in this whole process.

I'm always thankful to go through experiences, no matter what's experiences are. I try to be optimistic and positive in life. I look forward to start the new year in Australia, and we'll see how the next year goes.

Q. I know you talked about it a little bit on court after your win today with your kids being there, but how nice is it to have them around with you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I mean, it's such a nice feeling to have my family, both of my children along with my wife, watching from the first to last point. I think this is the first match that that happened.

Obviously my son playing tennis, he's eight years old now, he's aware of what is happening, who is who. He just loves going around, getting signatures, playing some tennis, assisting Goran with the ball picking, then coaching on the warmup sessions and training sessions when I'm on the court (smiling).

It's not something that I'm used to, that normally happens. It has been really affecting me in a great way this week. I've been enjoying myself so much on the court with my children. Of course, off the court as well.

It brings me harmony. It brings me I think also joy when I am experiencing, particularly on the day of the match, a bit more tension and emotions, pressure of coming into important match. Having them around just balances me really nicely emotionally. It has been working really well so far.

They're happy. I'm happy. All is good.

Q. There is still tennis that needs to be played. You may face Felix Auger-Aliassime in the semifinals. You played him twice this year. Can you tell me a bit about his progression, what kind of reputation he has on the circuit?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: He has a very good reputation on the

circuit. First of all, he's a very nice person. He always greets everyone and has been very respectful, which I think it's very important for every young player coming up to have respect for the players who have kind of paved the way for them to be able to be on the tour and play this wonderful sport around the world.

He has a great working ethics. He's a very complete player. He has improved tremendously in the last, particularly, I would say six to 12 months. His results are showing that. He had the three tournaments in a row won, played some amazing tennis indoors so far.

He beat me in the Laver Cup. If I get a chance to play him here, I would like to return the favor to him (smiling).

No, I mean, we practiced here before the tournament. He always brings this intensity to the court, which I like. He cares a lot. He's dedicated. He's got a really good team of people around him. He's on a good path.

He's top 10 now. He's been around for a few years already. We know what he's capable of. We know that he's one of the best players in the world. He can equally play well on all surfaces. He can be a threat to everyone really anywhere to be one of the contenders for the biggest titles in the world.

Q. To me this autumn, fall, since Tel Aviv, you looked hungrier than ever, fighting for matches. Is it because you want to prove something to the youngsters like you said on the pitch or also the fact you couldn't play for the reason we know two out of four Grand Slams and four out of eight Masters 1000s?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It's both.

Q. Which percentage?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: 100% both.

I have always something to prove, first to myself and then others. I think every time you step on the court, all eyes are on you. There's a lot of expectations from people who are watching you. Of course, for someone like myself in this position where you've had a really good career, and people always expect you to play at the highest possible level. That brings a lot of pressure I think. It's not always easy to handle that and to deal with that. It is the privilege of being successful tennis player.

I still want to keep going. I don't feel that the end is near for me in terms of my career. I feel good mentally, physically. I feel motivated. I'll keep pushing myself.

We'll see how far it goes. So far so good.

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