

Nitto ATP Finals

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Turin, Italy

Pala Alpitour, Torino

Casper Ruud

Press Conference



R. NADAL/C. Ruud

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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Going into today's match, was there a different mindset for you? You knew you already qualified for the semifinals. Did you feel that you could relax things a little bit? Was the intensity just as much there today as the other matches?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I felt like for sure a little bit different. It's not often you're in the situation like this. This is the only tournament where it's group stage.

I didn't imagine that I would be in that position after two matches, but luckily I was. Yeah, in a way you can take it, of course, as any other match. But at the end of the day you just want to get through it and not risk anything in terms of injuries, maybe overplaying or being out there for too long knowing you'll need to be ready for Saturday because whoever you play will be a tough match. A little bit different.

Again, you know you're playing Rafa, you want to play well. Yeah, there was nothing on the line except for some extra points, extra prize money in this match. Wasn't like last time we played, a Grand Slam final. It was a little bit different.

But I just tried to keep my flow going, that I had a good rhythm, like I said, not risking too much in terms of my body and the physical aspects of the match.

Q. Two finals in slams, No. 3 in the world. I'd like to know how things have changed for tennis in Norway. Two years ago you were a star coming up. This year confirmation. Have things changed? In Norway is there a big audience when tennis is on?

CASPER RUUD: Well, it's obviously growing. Tennis and golf had a great boost in a way when COVID came

because you had to stay at home and people wanted to try something new, try to play tennis again.

Many people, kids growing up in Norway, they have the option to play at least before. I know people who sort of took it up again in their later years after having not played for many years during COVID. I know people started playing for the first time and thought it was great.

It is growing. Football and winter sports is the biggest sports in Norway. Everyone in Norway, they love watching Premier League. All the weekends, that's what they show the most of on TV. The winter is coming now, so there will be a lot of winter sports.

Yeah, I mean, if it's the right time, on the right day, I guess people will also watch tennis. But it has not become like a big culture for tennis yet in Norway. I hope of course in years it can be. Like Sweden, for example, had so many big players in the past, they have more of a culture for it. Norway we don't yet.

I hope if I can continue to do well, people can start to watch even more, and that it can be a more natural part of a kid's choice when they want to choose a sport, that tennis can be one of them.

Q. The other player who qualified for the semifinals after just two matches, were you watching his matches?

CASPER RUUD: Novak, you mean?

Q. Yes. How do you assess where he is? You might face him at some point on the weekend.

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I didn't watch him the first match against Tsitsipas. It was quite late. I had dinner or something. But I watched a little bit against Rublev. It was yesterday. It looked like he played phenomenal. I mean, seems like he's in a great place both physically and mentally.

I remember when I watched tennis on TV when I was young, he would have these insane years. I remember



especially 2011 where he would win so much.

I believe he came to the Finals and he was sort of worn out a little bit and he lost a little bit surprisingly and didn't make it through. I guess now that he has not played so much this year, he's more ready for this event.

I guess it's just one of nine or 10 events he has played this year. I'm sure he's ready. He looks fresh, yeah, mentally and physically, like I said.

Tennis-wise, I think on this surface, he's the best player in the world. Like I said maybe earlier days as well, no offense to Carlos because he has the No. 1 spot and will end the year No. 1, but if we have to pick one on indoor hard court, depending on your life, I would choose Novak to play that set or match to win it, if it was depending on your life.

Just have to give credits to him. Looks like he's playing well. In Paris it showed that he's human as well, lost in the final, a little bit surprisingly to a younger, but also great player.

Seems like he's playing great. I hope of course I can play him. It means we have reached the final, both of us. I guess I will have to come up with something I have not been able to do yet in order to have a chance against him.

Q. After the US Open you had some early losses in several tournaments. I read that you said you played too many tournaments. What do you do to be as good as you can be in this tournament? Do you feel 100%? Where are your reflections on the way you can guide your schedule in the future if you want to have more energy all year long?

CASPER RUUD: I just think US Open was obviously a tough physical and mental tournament in many ways. It was a lot of fun, of course. After a result like that, you are quite tired.

Five days later, five days after the final, I was playing Davis Cup in Norway. Five days or a week or six days later I was playing Laver Cup in London. Four days after that I was playing in Asia.

It was just a little too hectic, the program. I felt a little tired and drained energy-wise. A lot of time zones traveling, many different time zones, jet lag was tough. Anyway, that can happen. It can happen to anyone.

I had already planned to play those events before US Open happened, so I felt a little obligated to play and go to Asia. I had not played in Tokyo before, not in Korea either.

I wanted to try and see how it is.

Even though I didn't play well, I had a great time. The fans over there, they love sports. You are treated very nice.

But, yeah, I was a little bit tired. I went home to Norway, had about two and a half weeks off from tournaments, and just recharged, practiced well.

Basel and Paris came. I didn't perform as well as I had hoped. It wasn't because I was feeling tired, still.

Here we are in the semis. I have played some great matches here. It's a good result for me to end the year in a good way.

Of course, I would like to try to go one step more than what I did last year, see if I can make the final. But I will have to play really well.

Energy-wise, mentally also, I feel ready for it. I will be ready to give it my all on Saturday.

Q. Regarding Norway, you, Haaland, Ingebrigtsen, is just a matter of generation or there's something in sports culture, sports school?

CASPER RUUD: It's a good question. Honestly, if you want to be an athlete in Norway, you have good options. You have athletic schools. We start quite young.

In these three cases that you are mentioning, we all had our fathers around helping us as we were very young. I think that can be a reason to why we have been able to succeed.

It's always very debatable if having father or parents as a coach is good or not. In this case, I think it has been good. In other cases it might be too much. I don't think there is a simple answer to that.

For us three that has worked. I'm not sure if Haaland's father has coached him all his life. At least he has been a football player before, knows what everything is about. I can imagine he has been very involved.

Yeah, I guess we are young, hungry to do well, just focused on our sports. That's it. It's not like we had a phone call when we were 10 years old and said, Let's all do well.

It's not something you can plan. It just happens. It's coincidental sometimes. Maybe it's the salmon we eat or the fresh water. I don't know what's going on. I think we are all just hungry to do well and perform in our sports.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

At the moment we have been able to do it so far. We hope we can keep it going, that more people can know about Norway as a country and also athletes from Norway that can do well in bigger sports.

Q. A little bit off the topic. When you look at members of the royal families in different parts of Europe, the Brits are there at Wimbledon, the Spanish Royal family are contacting Rafa when he plays, Carlos Alcaraz, the Danish members, et cetera. I was in Oslo middle of the year, in close proximity to the royal family when they opened the national gallery. I wondered if they have ever made contact with you when you've had huge results in Paris, New York?

CASPER RUUD: Not directly personally. But I know that the crown prince and the crown princess were there watching the Roland Garros final. That was a great honor, to be able to play in front of them. I have been invited to certain events, both at the royal I guess castle is what it's called.

Q. Palace.

CASPER RUUD: Palace (laughter).

The daughter of the crown prince and princess, she turned 18 this summer, and I was invited. I couldn't go. Tennis is just too hectic. We are all traveling all the time. I was not able to make it unfortunately. It's tough to say no when you get invited to this very nice event. There was another event I could not attend.

I have been contacted in ways, but not directly with the King yet. I know he's a great guy. I know he's really into sailing. I'm sure he also follows other sports.

Not for now. I'm sure he can find my number if he wants to (smiling).

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