

Nitto ATP Finals

Friday, 18 November 2022

Turin, Italy

Pala Alpitour, Torino

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/D. Medvedev

6-3, 6-7, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Can you explain what physically you were experiencing out there today, whether it was some kind of illness? What was it also that, given those circumstances, kept you out there for more than three hours when you still would have advanced even with a loss?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, it was just fatigue from grueling battle. That's all I can say. I mean, there was no illness. There was no particular part of the body that was bothering me. It was just overall physical exhaustion from the rallies and from the length of the play.

I had a day off between the first two matches always, so I felt fresh coming into the match. But as you always are, I was a bit more nervous and tense coming into the match against one of the top players of the world, top rivals, that Medvedev is for me in the last several years. You want to win regardless of the qualification that I already have, the elimination he has before the match. It doesn't matter.

We always want to win against each other regardless of where we play each against other. I think the match today was a showcase of those mentalities that we both possess. Of course, he wanted to finish a season with a win, and on the other hand I didn't want to lose to him. I can't calculate, I don't like to calculate, never did that. My mentality is to win every match that I play in the present moment.

Again, this stage of my career, every match like this is a golden opportunity for me to grab a win against one of the top guys of the world.

Without a doubt I went to the court in a state, throughout the entire match, with this kind of mentality that I want to win, not thinking about what's coming tomorrow.

Q. When the camera was focused on you on changes of ends, your hands were even shaking, when you have the towel over your face. You're saying exhaustion, but what was the feeling you were having? It looked like maybe there was a drop in sugar levels. Are you able to explain?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: There was a lot of different things. But I'm not going to go into details about it because I just don't feel it's a place for me to share that because why would I? I don't want to reveal what I'm going through exactly to my opponents.

Everyone has one of those days where they struggle more physically. For me that was today. I'm very proud to be able to find a way, because that's what we are I think owing to ourselves and to the team and to the people who come and watch you, is to always try to give your very best in that given moment.

Q. What did you say to yourself when Daniil was serving for the match at 5-4, considering in the previous match he was serving for it at 5-3?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I mean, I saw his last match. For sure, I mean, it's very tough for him to lose all three matches 7-6 in the third. It happens.

He's a great champion. I have tremendous respect for him. Amazing player. He entered one stage of the match towards the end of the second and most of the third set that level where he was just not missing from baseline. I needed to change things up, I needed to shorten up the points. He really challenged me in every way. I'm just very happy that I overcome that challenge.

What did I tell myself? I mean, in those moments I just try to get an extra breath of air and I guess have a specific approach to every single point without really trying to think what was or what will be, which is much easier said than done. But it worked.

I anticipated, I read his serve that game pretty well. Made most of first serves, but I managed to read him well and just played some really good points. He made a



double-fault, I think, as well in that game. Of course, he was tight because you got to close out the match, which is never easy. That's it.

After that I found myself in a better position to win it.

Q. For a human being like me, just normal one, compared to a champion like you, can you explain to us what happened in that specific moment when Rafa in Wimbledon, all this stuff, his father say, Go away, leave? Many times I see you are dead, you are finished, and one second later, I don't know whatever is it, something. Where is the limit? How can you understand where is the limit between to be destroyed and to become the winner and the champion?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I don't think that a limit exists. It's really in your head. It's really about perspective and approach and your perception of how you see things in that given moment.

Of course, when you're going through physical struggles, it affects the game, it affects how you feel mentally, it affects your body language. Of course, the opponent likes seeing you down, and he's trying to dominate in the rallies, he's trying to get the upper hand of the match, which was kind of the situation that was happening today.

But I think the biggest battle, as I've said before, is always the inner battle. If you manage to find yourself in that optimal state of mind and body as often as you possibly can, I feel you can extract the best and reap the best results for yourself in every moment, every point, every match.

But, again, these are words. These are things that we can talk about. This is theory. But when you get on the court, of course you have various factors and elements that are affecting that. Your game, of course the fans, everything is in play. The nerves are kicking in. Sometimes they get the best out of you, sometimes they get the worst out of you.

There is no secret potion or one way to success. I feel it's always important to have an open mind, open ears, open eyes, and learn from every experience hoping that you can use certain lessons that you learned for the next time to be better and to maybe avoid big oscillations.

I mean, in an individual sport like tennis, it's a very dynamic sport, things happen very fast. The more you oscillate, the worse it is. You always want to try to keep that curve as flat as possible. With the drop of energy, focus, whatever happens, you try to bounce back very quickly.

Of course, there are different ways to do that. We are all

different. Some use some mental exercises and things. Some use subconscious or sublingual [sic] messaging or things they have to focus on. Maybe it's a team, a person, an object, to put them back in the present moment. Sometimes it's a thought. It's various things.

We went deep into philosophy of sport now and mentality, but I think it's important to always seek the balance because tennis is a very demanding game. Because it's individual, you don't have the luxury of relying on your teammates, you don't have the luxury of resting for 10 minutes and then you can come back in the game.

5 minutes can cost you the whole match, or even less. That's why this sport is beautiful, I think, because it's so challenging. You just have to learn constantly, I feel demand the biggest dedication from yourself, because otherwise there is always 10s of players and groups of players that is going to work more than you. When I say 'work', I mean not only physical, but all the other things we talked about.

Q. You said you don't want to tell exactly what happened or what's going on. I wonder, are you totally okay or are you afraid that something like that might happen again, might be worse?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I'm not the freshest guy right now talking to you as I was maybe yesterday (smiling).

Of course, I'm very proud and content to be able to win the match that I did today for the reasons that I spoke about earlier. I feel that every big win against one of the best players in the world, particularly Medvedev in these conditions, can only boost your confidence.

On the physical side, I'm not worried because, I mean, worry just depletes you of the vital energy you need. If something happens tomorrow in a good or bad way, it happens and I have to deal with it then tomorrow.

I'm going to do everything I possibly can today with my physio, with myself, with my team in order to get the good rest, the good recovery. I have things that have always been part of my routine. I know what I need to do.

I've had many cases in my life before where I managed to recover very quickly. Hopefully that's going to be the case again.

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