

Nitto ATP Finals

Sunday, 20 November 2022

Turin, Italy

Pala Alpitour, Torino

Casper Ruud

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/C. Ruud

7-5, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. No doubt you are extremely disappointed, but it's been a remarkable year for you and what you've achieved. Does that compensate for tonight when you reflect on that?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, for sure. I mean, in the end it's been disappointing to end up losing these big finals. Overall if you gave me an offer to end the year at No. 3, play the finals that I've played, at the 1st of January this year, I would probably sign the contract right away. No doubt about it.

I'm very happy with all that I've achieved, how things turned out, played out for me this year. It's been great.

But I still feel like there are room for improvements, so that's a good thing I believe to still be happy and know that there is still room for improvement, which is a good thing.

I feel like, of course, I've been playing great tennis this year, but I still feel like I haven't maybe peaked or played hopefully my best tennis of my life so far.

Definitely very happy with the year all in all. This result to me is maybe one of the most surprising, finishing the year here on a blistering fast indoor hard court, making the final, not something that I found very likely. Maybe neither did I in the US Open to make the final.

I've overachieved compared to my own mind, so I'm very happy about that.

Q. You were talking about room for improvement. What do you think technically, for example, needs to be done to close the gap against a guy like Djokovic?

CASPER RUUD: Well, obviously him and I, we play a little

bit different tennis. He plays more flat than myself. I think that can be a challenge sometimes. I felt it today. I was not really able to play the shots that I wanted to or - what should I say - take control of the game because he keeps playing with good depth, flat shots that kind of skid off the court, which are tough to attack. I hope that I can learn how to play this way indoor.

Technically I'm not perfect at all. Many things I can improve technically. But my base as a tennis player has improved a lot this last year. But there are many things that I can improve, many things that I still find uncomfortable, shots that I don't feel comfortable hitting, especially maybe moving forward, coming to the net.

But, yeah, all in all I think I can improve all parts of my game, which is a good thing. Yeah, I cannot tell you one thing specific right now. But in my mind I still believe that I can play better tennis than what I have done this year.

Q. You said you surprised yourself making these finals on the hard courts. Do you go into next year not being surprised and expecting to make the hard court finals?

CASPER RUUD: I don't think I will expect them, but I'm going to come into next year with a little bit different mindset I believe. When we come down to Australia, I'll have probably some big goals that I want to achieve down there. If it doesn't happen, it won't happen. But I think my mindset going into next year's going to be different to what I have done previous years.

This year I was not even able to play the Australian Open, so it's a big chance for me to get some sort of revenge down there and hopefully have a good result.

But in the end I know there are so many good players. I know that I can beat good players and I can lose to any player.

I don't know. I mean, I look forward to going to Australia and starting a new season. I look forward to playing best-of-five sets again. I think for Australian Open I can say I'm already hungry to have a good result and let's see



how next year plays out.

There will be a lot of points and results for me to defend. I hope I can do that and achieve even more. That's not going to be easy because this year I've done very well in certain tournaments, but I will try my best.

Q. Another question on the improvement you intend to do. This year you reached three finals but lost three of them. Against Rafa and Djokovic you didn't win any sets. Tennis is small margins. What miss you from the point of view if you take an overview on these losses?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I think those two players, Novak and Rafa, are exceptional of course. They have this sort of ability in them to step up when they really have to that I don't have. That's something I can try to improve for sure.

They always seem to win the close points, the close sets. I have been on the losing side when I played players like them.

I have played Novak sometimes now, and every set that I lost, not every set has been close, but some sets have been 7-6, 7-5, so on. I just can't seem to step up when I really need to. That's what their abilities are so great and have been for so long. That's something of course I wish to develop, have confidence in myself that that I can do it.

Hopefully this year can contribute to that confidence.

Yeah, I mean, I've had many experiences this year in losing these finals. It's just going to try to motivate me to win them if I ever get to them again.

If you look at the opponents I've played, it's been tough. You have to say that Rafa in Roland Garros and Novak here, it's probably some of the toughest challenges that we have. I don't feel very bad that I wasn't able to beat them.

But it gives me motivation and a hunger to maybe next time, like I said, if I ever get to another final like this, I hope I can learn from what I have done this year and not been able to do and see how it goes.

Yeah, I just feel like I still have room for improvements, even though I'm very happy with my game and how things have turned out this year.

Q. Which have been your best two matches, in your opinion, along this year? When were you more satisfied that you got close to your margin? Also, out of the three finals you lost, which one did you think you had maybe a chance or you were closer?

CASPER RUUD: Well, I think the closest final was probably the US Open final. It was one set all. I had some set points in the third set that I was not able to win unfortunately. That's the one I felt closest to, maybe the one that stung a little bit more because I felt closer than maybe this one or Roland Garros.

Yeah, the two best matches that I played? That's not easy. I think honestly one of them could be against Berrettini in the US Open quarterfinal. I played great from the first to the last point. Three sets to love against him in the US Open is not easy. I was able to do that. I was very pleased and happy with the level there. I can also argue yesterday I played one of my best matches of the year against Rublev.

It's tough to name two now. I played close to 70, 80 matches. I really cannot remember them all.

I really remember when I played Berrettini in the US Open. I was 6-1, 5-1 in 50 minutes or so. I was playing so well. Of course, he didn't have his day. But that one I remember particularly. Maybe yesterday because it was the recent memory.

Like I said, the final that was maybe closer was the one in US Open.

Q. While your rise started in the second half of '21, this year has been remarkable. How do you stop yourself from suffering from some letdowns or anything like that next year when there's more focus on you?

CASPER RUUD: Well, it's always refreshing to start a new year down in Australia. It's like the mentality of course is you want to do well, but you know this is just the beginning of a long year.

I think one of the bigger goals for me next year is going to try to - I know it won't be easy - but to go almost the whole year without facing too many injuries. This year in the beginning I faced a couple which sort of let me out of play for a little bit. Australian Open, I was not able to play.

Yeah, I'm probably going to have more eyes on me from next year on. That's something I'm going to just try to deal with and see how it goes.

I mean, I don't play tennis because I want the media to write good about me or write that I won or whatever. I play because I love competing. I love to try to win. That's what I have to focus about. Whatever might be written about me or not, that's not going to be in my head. I'm just going to

focus on the matches that I play, take it from there.

I mean, like I said, when you're starting in Australia, you know you probably going to play 10s of thousands of points in the year, hopefully if you have a good one, close to 80 or 90 matches. It's just one of many.

It's like the start of a marathon and you are motivated for it.

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