

# Nitto ATP Finals

Sunday, 20 November 2022

Turin, Italy

Pala Alpitour, Torino

## Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/C. Ruud

7-5, 6-3

(Applause.)

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Thank you. Grazie. Thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: A record six titles at this tournament. Also the first player to win this event in three different decades. How does it feel to finish the season on such a high?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It feels deeply satisfying and at the same time huge relief because of the circumstances that I have been through this year, situations earlier this year of course with Australia. We don't need to go back. We know what happened.

That had an effect obviously on my start of the year. For the first several months, I was trying to find that balance game-wise but also mentally in order to be able to come back to the court and find that tennis level that I need.

That has started to happen actually in Italy also, which is no coincidence. In Rome where I won the big tournament. I started to really feel more comfortable playing tennis, being on the court. Wimbledon title was extremely important at that point in time. After Wimbledon, I lost only Paris Bercy basically finals. All the other tournaments I won. Had an amazing finish of the season with most of the tournaments I played indoors I won. Indoors has been historically very successful for me.

Playing in Italy, in a country where I love to play, have really special connection with people, makes this trophy and this win even more special.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. I know you've had your family here all week. How special was it to share that moment with your wife and**

**children?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Extremely special for me. I'm very grateful to my wife and my children for coming. I don't get to have these moments on the tour with them so much, so I of course try to enjoy it as much as I possibly can.

I took both of my children, particularly my son, a lot to the tennis training sessions, warmups, matches. He was very loud, I must say. I was very surprised. I could hear his voice the entire time (smiling). He was very much into it. They both are now aware of what's going on, what the father is doing.

Of course, they make my life on the tour easier. The pressures, the expectations, the tensions that you normally go through on a big tournaments like this, when they're around, it lowers a bit so I can have that time off, quality time with my family. That really soothes me and gives me serenity in order to recalibrate and play my best tennis the next day.

It was funny because the other day I had a conversation with my wife. It's great to have them around. She was like, This is too stressful. She's been with me for almost 20 years in my professional career. It's a lot that she has to do with children around, entertain them, at the same time be there for me.

I don't know how many tournaments more I'm going to get this opportunity have them all. I cherish these moments a lot. Hopefully, as they grow older, they'll realize even more what special moments we're living together.

**Q. Your daughter is more into the coloring book than your tennis.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I love it (smiling).

**Q. Tennis is not a simple sport in terms of it's not like football where there's a Champions League, champion. A lot of different numbers involved. Do you think you're the best player in the world?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I'm not. I'm fifth (smiling).



This week I probably am. Overall the rankings are showing who had the best year, and Alcaraz is the No. 1 in the world. Not much to say about that.

But in my mind I always see myself as the best player in the world, of course. I have that kind of mentality and that kind of approach. Regardless of who is across the net, regardless of what the surface is, regardless of what season it is, what number of the professional season in my career we're facing, I mean, it's always the same. The ambitions are as high as possible.

That kind of approach, I feel it brought me to where I am sitting here today as a 35-year-old, holding one of the biggest trophies in the sport.

I don't feel like there's any stopping happening or thoughts about letting the tennis career go for some time now. I mean, I feel motivated. I feel good in my own body. I take care of myself. Of course, great team of people. As long as there's that flair happening inside of me...

Of course, it all starts with emotions. I think how you mentally approach or what is your observation or perspective of tennis, of this sport that you do.

For me, that's love and passion really. As long as that's there I'll do anything in my power to challenge the young guys for the biggest trophies.

**Q. This is your sixth title, first after seven years. Which one was the hardest to win and why?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, it's been a while since the last trophy. Seven years, as you mentioned. I have a pretty good memory with my matches, all the things that I've achieved on the court. Maybe I can't recall exactly which win of this trophy and the tournament was the toughest one. I think each victory's unique and particular in its own way.

I think the first win in 2008 against Davydenko in Shanghai. The first one is always the most special one, of course. So I probably would pick that one.

**Q. I know you became a wine producer. We're in Italy, Piemonte, for wine. To which wine you would compare that trophy?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: You have to speak with my uncle because it is him that is doing this wine business. I'm not involved at all.

I don't drink alcohol. I do drink a glass of wine here and

there, red one. I know about the Italian wine, of course. It's one of the best in the world.

There's not much more I can say about it. I just wish my uncle best of luck. I'm there to support him in any way I possibly can.

Keep away that wine bottle from me (smiling).

**Q. I preface this by saying I'm not trying to retire you, but what is the end goal for you? What is the overall vision that you want to achieve most of all? I'm not going to ask you about the money. We've been through that aspect. Have you thought of something like that?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: There is no end zone, as they call it in American football. I don't feel I have thoughts or ideas about how I want to end my career in terms of when I want to end it, if that's an answer for you.

If I had something on my mind, I would share it with you, saying, Okay, this is what I'm navigating towards, and when I do that, I'll leave the racquet.

I don't have that.

For me it's about, first of all, having good emotions and positive feelings on the court, practice court. One thing is to win big trophies, and everything is super nice, it's a fairy tale. But you got to go through hardship, a lot of hardship, a lot of difficult days and challenging tasks on a daily basis in order to push yourself, motivate yourself, work on yourself in order to get to this level and eventually with a chance to win.

So I enjoy the process on a day-to-day basis, I really do. I play with my son. I play with professionals. I play with juniors. I watch tennis. It's a passion and obsession in a way. It's just an integral part of my life, of who I am. It just fulfills me whether I'm on the court or watching someone else play. I'm a true fan of the game, if you want to define it that way.

That's for me the most important thing. If that's something that is fading away or I'm not feeling that passion or love for the game as much in terms of competition, because I feel like the love for the tennis will never fade away, it will always stay there. So I will always stay in tennis in whatever shape, form or role.

But competition is something different. Professional competitive career requires a lot of sacrifice with family and all the other things in life. For that, it's necessary to have the support of the close ones, to have the right balance, to

figure out optimally what works the best so that you can still continue playing tennis.

Right now things are functioning well on that end for me. But you never know what's going to happen. My kids are eight and five. They're growing older. They'll have different interests. Maybe they'll have a different requirements or demands from me. I have to think about them. If I have to spend more time with them or support them in their lives, maybe less with tennis, that's going to happen.

I don't know what the future holds, but I know that what I hold in my mind is a huge hunger still to win trophies, make history of this sport, compete on the highest level all around the world, bring good emotions to sportsfans, tennis fans. That's what drives me a lot.

I have a lot of different motivational factors, and I don't lack any motivation for the moment. Of course, we all have bad days or bad weeks. But generally the feel is still there.

**Q. Considering this season where you couldn't play all the tournaments, when you see all the young guys who are coming, how hungry are you? More than ever or...**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I have not eaten after the match, so right now I'm very hungry (smiling).

Joking aside, of course I am. As I mentioned before, motivation is fully present. I'm very hungry to prove that I'm still one of the best players in the world, that I can win big trophies.

So see you in Australia (smiling).

**Q. I had the impression this tournament, you won all the matches, but you were not playing physically at your best. Still you were capable to fight. You told us about all the motivation. When you're not feeling well, what pushes you harder and harder since you have already proved everything to everybody?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I wouldn't agree that all the matches I physically struggled. I mean, the first two matches were great. Straight-set wins against Tsitsipas and Rublev. Then I did struggle with the match with Medvedev. This was the toughest match of the week for me, no doubt.

It was not easy to recover and to really be able to play well in the semis in less than 24 hours after that match, that thriller against Medvedev.

What can I say? I have a great physio. I have a great team. I have routines that work for me very well, I feel like, in terms of recovery.

I think most of all it's what you tell to yourself. We talked about it. I think someone asked me after the Medvedev thriller, Where is the limit? I really feel that limit oftentimes exists only in your mind and your perspective.

It's an internal battle with myself because there's one voice that is always telling you you can't do it, you're too tired, this and that, right? The bad guy and the good guy. You try to feed the good guy so he can become louder and stronger than the bad guy. It's as simple as that.

Much easier to say it than to actually do it. In those moments where you have pain, this or that, you don't feel maybe like standing up in the morning, whatever it is, there has to be something, whatever it is for all of us, that gets us up from the bed. It's the heart, it's the mind, whatever the life force or the fuel is for you.

For me it's still the hunger that someone asked me about. It's love for the game, no doubt. Passion. I love the game. I said it already. Of course, making history of the tennis sport, which of course is my favorite sport, the sport that has given me so much privileges in life and benefits.

Why not try it? Why not dream about it? I have no problem to verbalize that I have biggest goals, that I want to be the best, that I want to win every tournament. I don't think that's not humble, I just feel it's important to respect everyone in the game but still be confident with yourself.

I don't see anything bad in that.

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