

Nitto ATP Finals

Monday, 13 November 2023

Turin, Italy

Pala Alpitour, Torino

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/H. Rune

7-6, 6-7, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Congrats, Novak. Tell us how big it is to know that you are going to finish the year as No. 1 and it is going to be 400 weeks on Monday as the No. 1 player in the world.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It's huge. It means a lot obviously. I knew coming into the tournament here I needed only one win to clinch the year-end No. 1. I really wanted that to happen already tonight. I didn't want to prolong in a way the situation and complicate in a way this particular goal. I'm really glad that I managed to do that tonight.

It always has been a huge objective and huge goal of mine to be No. 1 in the world. Other than Grand Slams, that's what counts the most. To finish off the year as No. 1 in the world at this stage of my life and career is something really amazing.

At the beginning of the year, I really wasn't prioritizing that, I must say. I was prioritizing more Grand Slams. Because of the great results, particularly in Grand Slams, accumulated points, I think I put myself in a very good position to fight for year-end No. 1. Winning Paris put me in a great position. So I really went for it.

Anything that happens from this moment onwards I guess in this tournament is a bonus for me.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What was the most difficult moment in this match? Could you explain how do you push yourself in this moment?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, there were a lot of difficult moments. It was very challenging to play Holger, who I thought was on a very high level tonight. He had a very clear game plan. You could see that he was very sharp, very aggressive from the beginning, taking every chance

he had to come to the net.

He served very accurately, very precise, very strong. It was very difficult to find any, let's say, holes in his game tonight. I really had to work very hard and battle, which was the case, to get the win. It lasted more than three hours. I think the longest match that I ever played here.

I'm very glad that I managed to overcome this challenge because I felt like Holger was close, if not his best, but close to his best.

Somehow whenever we face each other, it's always a very close match. We play very similar styles of tennis. I think that's probably also the contributor to close matches.

There was extra tension for me I think knowing the win would clinch me the year No. 1, so I was feeling that and frustrated at times tonight. In the important moments, I guess when it mattered, I found the right solution to win.

Q. 1:45 a.m., perfect time for a technical question. I would like to ask you from a technical side, what are the strengths that Jannik has that Holger doesn't have? Your next match is going to be against Sinner. From a technical point of view, what are the toughest challenge you're going to face?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I mean, Jannik probably has a better forehand, I would say. Holger of tonight played extremely high level. I think Holger of tonight could win against Sinner and against anybody that he would face on the court. Will be very interesting to see how he matches with other players in the group.

I mean, Jannik obviously is in a great form. He's been playing maybe tennis of his life this year, best season of his career. Obviously playing at home with the Italian crowd helps a lot, boosts his confidence, give him in his way wings to play his best tennis, which he did today. I saw a little bit of his match against Tsitsipas. He played great, very solid, good serves.

Jannik is one of the fastest and strongest hitters from the baseline out there in the world that we have, and have had



for the last couple years. I know his game very well. I never lost to him, but we had some really close matches. Last time we played in semis of Wimbledon, obviously.

Yeah, I'm going to obviously prepare myself well for the match. I know what to expect. I can expect the highest of him with, of course, the support of the crowd.

It's going to be nice I think for the tournament, us facing each other. I think we both in great form. Let's see what happens.

Q. Considering what you've achieved this year, three majors, a point from a fourth, tying the all-time record of majors at 24, now the year-end for the eighth time, 400 weeks coming up, would you think this is the best year of your career?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: One of the best years. I wouldn't say the best, but one of the best. I mean, the fact that I've won three out of four slams and played a final the fourth and it's still not the best year of my life, it's quite nice to have that kind of situation (smiling).

It's definitely one of the best seasons. I mean, I had couple of years, I think three times, that I won three out of four slams in a season, like 2011, 2015. In those years, I won more matches. I mean, I played more tournaments. I was really, I mean, feeling very dominant on the tour.

It's quite different circumstances this year comparing to all the other years because I played, what, 10, 11 tournaments this year. I played very well - least of anybody. I just managed to peak at the right tournaments, at the right time. That's what matters to me really.

I mean, Grand Slam season, one of the best for sure. Overall, especially in the last couple months, I haven't lost a match since Wimbledon, so... I've been feeling great on the court and playing really well.

But it's hard to compare.

Q. In the last match versus Holger, it seemed like he got a bit tired, and you looked like you could keep on playing forever. Do you think you have the physical upper hand against Holger?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I don't know. I'm not sure if he got really tired. Obviously we had some grueling exchanges, physically demanding games. Of course, you get tired in those moments.

But I think he's a very fit player. He works very hard to be able to play for many hours on the court. I think that he

didn't seem very tired at the end of the match.

Of course, I made a break in the third and finished with 6-3. But the break that I made at 3-2 for me in the third, we had some very long rallies. Another long rally at the break point. I didn't get a sense that he was maybe physically struggling. I guess it's the competition and the heat of the moment, sometimes you get the kind of shots that you want, sometimes you don't. I just served out well I think, especially in last game.

But, yeah, every single match we play against each other is a marathon now. It's amazing. He's incredibly dynamic player, very quick, very powerful, so aggressive. He has one of the best returns that I ever faced, to be honest. Amazing return. He has improved his serve and his overall game. I think in the last month that he's been working with Boris, there's obviously a benefit to this relationship that they're having.

Q. You already spoke about the broken racquets. You said it's something not to be proud about. From a pragmatic point of view, more than educational one, is it sometimes for a player something that you need to restart, something useful?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I mean, some people are saying that if you want to use that word 'pragmatic' for me to do that because then I can release whatever tension I'm holding and frustration and move on, maybe that was the case tonight.

But I wouldn't encourage anybody doing that. Neither do I encourage myself. I'm not happy. I'm not happy with that. I definitely don't like that I have done that, but I have done it and that is it and I have to take responsibility.

Yeah, I guess in some cases it has happened in the past where I do that and come back playing more freely, I guess, just letting go. There are different ways, maybe smarter ways to let go of the frustration than breaking a racquet (smiling).

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