

# Nitto ATP Finals

Sunday, 19 November 2023

Turin, Italy

Pala Alpitour, Torino

## Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/J. Sinner

6-3, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Congrats, Novak. Goran came in earlier and he said on Saturday he knew you would win the tournament because you just switched on. Did you have the same feeling?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes, I did. I think the match against Alcaraz last night and the one tonight, probably two best matches under the circumstances that I've played this season against two players that are in fantastic form. I mean, obviously the quality of Alcaraz and Sinner we all know.

Playing Sinner tonight in front of his home crowd, and the way I finished the tournament and finished the season, is amazing. I'm very, very proud of the performance.

Obviously what Goran was referring to is probably after I clinched the year No. 1 with the first win over Rune, I was not mentally present I think fully in the tournament. After that I was like, yeah, kind of half in, half out feeling. That reflected on my level of tennis and my performance and the way I felt on the court.

Obviously thanks to Sinner for allowing me to be in the semifinals when I was there. I thought now, okay, I'm going to try and step it up. And I did. I played two really high-level matches.

I started very aggressively tonight against Jannik, which was the different to the group stage match we had against each other. I think that match helped me prepare myself better for the atmosphere, the crowd. Obviously I analyzed the match and I looked what I could have done better. I think I've done it very well for the entire match.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Are you able to put into words the emotions when that last point happened? Was that the highlight or**

**was it chatting with and hugging the children?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Hmm... It's always children, honestly. I mean, obviously winning a match with this importance and significance is always an incredible feeling in the end and also huge relief because there's a very high tension and pressure that you feel on the court.

I was pretty much playing flawless tennis a set and 3-2. Yeah, then I got tight, I must say. Started to miss the first serve. Crowd got into it. I was lucky that he missed an easy put-away forehand at, what was it, 4-3 and deuce. You could say also I was unlucky to hit the net cord on the passing shot for double break. At this level it happens.

I just maintained my focus. I could feel from the beginning that it was a different vibe, different energy from him and from me comparing to the match we had four, five days ago. I felt that maybe he wasn't as free or as comfortable from the very beginning like he was in the four matches prior to the finals.

I felt, Okay, my opportunity is now and I have to take it. I have to be controlling the rallies and I have to be the one that is going to, so to say, impose himself on the court, he needs to feel my presence, which wasn't the case in the group stage match. I think that was probably the major tactical difference between the two matches. Obviously him finishing with a double-fault is not ideal.

It's a great reward I think for what my team and I and my family have been through this year, being one of the most successful years in my career that I ever had. Four out of five major tournaments I won, played finals of Wimbledon. I couldn't ask for more, to be honest. I'm very, very proud of the season.

**Q. You won four out of five of the most important tournaments of the year. For 2024, how you keep yourself motivated? How is it possible to do better than this?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, you can win four slams and Olympic gold (smiling).



Let's see. I mean, I have always the highest ambitions and goals. That's not going to be different for the next year, that's for sure. The drive that I have is still there. My body has been serving me well, listening to me well. I have a great team of people around me.

Motivation, especially for the biggest tournaments in sport, is still present. It still inspires me to keep going. In the end of the day, people see you performing in the big tournaments, but they don't see all the weeks and months of dedicated day-to-day, week-to-week work, trying to build your form so that you can peak where you want to peak. For me, obviously those are Grand Slams and World Tour Finals, and next year hopefully also Olympic Games.

The mindset is the same. I'll keep going. I don't know whether I'm going to have as good of a year next year, but I'm going to keep this kind of, yeah, freshness of mind and in a way motivation to do that.

**Q. Is the Olympics next year your major target, given it's the one major honor you don't have?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It is definitely one of the major goals for next year, other than Grand Slams. It's going to be very congested schedule with going from the slowest to the fastest surface in sport back to the slowest. Clay, grass, clay, then hard court. Obviously that's a very demanding, challenging stretch of the year.

I'm going to have to speak with my team to see how we can plan out our preparations, training, so that I'm able to play my best tennis where I want to.

**Q. Which Novak is stronger: Novak 10 years ago or Novak right now? Who would win this match?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: 10 years ago was 2013, so I would say Novak of today. 2015 was one of the best years, probably the best year I had with 19 finals in a row on all the tournaments, three out of four slams. I had quite a great 18 months in 2015 and half of 2016.

Again, the moments in time are different for me. I don't try to play as much as I did play 10 years ago. I have to pick and choose the right tournaments and right periods of the year where I can perform my best. It's tough to compare.

But someone did ask me the same question not a while ago. The question was actually phrased like, Who would win in the matchup? I said it would be an easy job for a 36-year-old, yeah (laughter). Joking, of course. I don't know what would be the score. I would give the young myself a hard time, that's for sure.

**Q. What are some things you've learned about yourself this year both as a player and as a person?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Whew. Not to get too philosophical, but I think let's start from the player.

I learned and kind confirmed once again that the right scheduling and programming is giving me the benefits and the results that I want to.

I really wasn't happy with my clay court season up to Roland Garros, was doubting my game a lot. But then I do have a great team of people around me that remind me of the fact that I should trust the process.

Normally in the Grand Slams I'm a different player, and it's true. That was one of the key turning points I think of the season for me, winning the 23rd slam in Paris. That kind of I think gave me really wings for the rest of the year. Since then, I lost two matches and won many tournaments.

Yeah, always around clay court season I go through kind of a roller coaster mentally. I think game-wise, as well. But I'm thankful for it because normally that's the time where I learn a lot about myself and how to stay in the moment, how to not project too much negativity on myself and if I'm not playing well, if I'm not doing well.

As a person, again, balance of the private and professional life is the key. I mean, obviously it's different for everyone. We all different individuals. This is a very demanding sport with high travel intensity throughout the year. You have to play worldwide, which is beautiful, which allows us to travel the world, play in front of many different people and nations. At the same time it separates you from the family and from the dear ones.

That was probably the biggest challenge I had internally for me, is how to balance things out and still be able to participate in my children's lives and my wife's life and be able to be there when it matters. When I'm not, how can I stay connected. Obviously technology allows you to communicate, but it's different when you were away.

Especially after achieving so much and being as old as I am, there is always a question mark should I be going for another year like this or maybe less or maybe I stop. I do have those conversations internally and also with people around me.

I think - well, I don't think. I'm super grateful and blessed that I still have greatest support of the closest ones to keep going. Without that I wouldn't definitely be going. Obviously family is the priority in life, their well-being, health, the moments we share with each other.

At the same time for me personally, of course people around me, but for me personally, it's still huge motivation to keep going and making history of this sport. So I still enjoy it. I love competition. I love winning tournaments obviously and being the best in the world. I know that there is a lot of people around the world, especially from my region, that follow me and they want me to keep going, which is an added strength.

It's kind of juggling between the two, really understanding how to maintain that balance that will allow me to be happy, fulfilled professionally and privately.

**Q. This week you overcome your old rival Roger for a title in this tournament, beating your two new rivals Carlos and Jannik. How much their presence give you extra motivation like it's not your time to win titles, I'm still here?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: If you understood the situation this way, I'm glad. Hopefully they feel the same.

Yeah, I mean, I want them to feel that kind of pressure. When they play me, I want them to feel that it's going to require the best tennis from them in order to win against me. That's what I want my opponents to feel, no doubt, because that helps mentally coming into the match.

I think the more I win on the biggest stage, the more this kind of aura grows, and I'm glad for it, no doubt. Of course, that's not going to win you the match, but it might give you the little percentage, the little edge.

What I said on the court for Jannik, I really mean it. Very nice guy. Great values. His family, entire team. He deserves his success. He needs to keep going because he's definitely on the right path. I'm not the only one who is saying he can win slams and be No. 1 in the world. I would be very surprised if that doesn't happen. I don't know if it's next year or the year to come. He's 22. He has a lot of time ahead of him.

Rune, Alcaraz and him are the big three, next big three, if you want to call them. They are going to carry this sport.

I will hang on for as long as I feel like hanging on, as long as I'm... I think as long as I'm able to win against them on the big stage, I'll still keep going because why stop if you're still winning the biggest titles. Once they start to, yeah, kick my butt, then I will consider probably having a little break or maybe a permanent break from professional tennis.

Yeah, Jannik, the Italian tennis is in good hands. I think

Jannik is someone that is very professional, that loves his country. He does all the right things with his people. It's great that we have World Tour Finals in a country that really loves tennis and loves sport. Of course calcio is calcio, but tennis also has grown so much in the last years with Berrettini's success, his success, Fognini and Musetti.

They have obviously been doing a good job systematically with the federation that is getting so many players, men and women. Of course, ideally for them would be an Italian winner and different result today.

I think what I said on the court, I really mean it. It was amazing to experience this much attention and support and popularity like we had in the last 10 days, all of us players. It was really amazing.

I played here already two years, but this year was something different. I think it's credit to Jannik, as well, of course being Italian and being one of the favorites to win the title. The anticipation and I think the excitement of the whole nation to support him and back him was something that produced this incredible energy that I really enjoyed.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports