

# Nitto ATP Finals

Monday, 11 November 2024

Turin, Italy

Inalpi Arena, Torino

## Casper Ruud

Press Conference



C. RUUD/C. Alcaraz

6-1, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Casper, well done.

CASPER RUUD: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: What part of your game pleased you the most today?

CASPER RUUD: I think I was serving and returning quite well, which is really important on this surface. The serve has been something that I've been struggling a bit with the last weeks. I'm happy it worked better today.

My return, I was able to make some really good returns when I really needed to during close returning games and break points, so I was happy with that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Can you maybe outline your expectations when you came into this tournament, what kind of goals you had.**

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, for me this year I'm coming into the tournament with probably the least confidence of all the players in terms of match wins and my recent form, especially on the indoor hard court. Has not been easy to find match wins at all for me.

I've been joking saying that maybe I can save them all for this week (smiling). At least I won today, so...

I'm not full of confidence. I think that's been showing in the last weeks. A match like today might be able to change it. We're at the end of the season, so there aren't going to be that many more tournaments coming up.

If I can finish on a strong note here, I'm going to be really happy. You need to bring your A game. That's kind of been the goal. If you don't bring your A game against

these players, might as well pack your bag and call it the season.

**Q. When you're playing Carlos, or even Jannik, do they feel like the younger players? Where do you put yourself in sort of generationally with tennis these days? Obviously no one's in Novak's generation. Where do you slot yourself in and how do you see the landscape?**

CASPER RUUD: Well, I divide it into almost like in two because you have from Medvedev to anyone between kind of him and Khachanov down to like, let's say, de Minaur, his age, which is '99. So between '96 and '99 year, there's a lot of players who were born during those years, are doing good, are in the top 10. You have Daniil, obviously Sascha, myself, Stef, de Minaur, Rublev. There's a bunch of us, then you have Jannik and Carlos or even younger.

Jannik is 2002 or 1?

**Q. 2001.**

CASPER RUUD: Born 2001. And Carlos 2003?

**Q. Yes.**

CASPER RUUD: Yeah.

Those guys are I guess younger but they have done better than let's say the '90s kids, whatever you or I want to call them, already in their career. Yeah, all credits to them.

They have been this year almost in a league of their own. But they're also human. I mean, they will lose matches, just not that many during a year. If you can beat them, you're going to have to play really well.

I think it's really fun to watch them play, both when they play each other, but also any other match they play I like to watch them. I think they're great for the sport.

**Q. Having been such a big fan of Rafa, will you go to Malaga to watch next week? Can you put into words what Rafa's retirement will mean for the sport in**



**general.**

CASPER RUUD: I won't go. I've played and seen enough tennis during the year, so... I'll watch it probably on TV, but hopefully on a beach, quiet, just relaxed (smiling).

I think it was inevitable obviously with Roger, him, Andy and Novak kind of being the last of those guys who will retire at some point.

I kind of think Novak said it well during the Saudi tournament. Please don't retire yet because you have so many fans around the world.

Even among the players, it's kind of... One match that showed it quite clearly to me was during the Roland Garros this year, there were a lot of players that came out to watch Rafa-Zverev. Typically you don't have Swiatek, Novak, Carlos, everyone coming out to watch the first round of a slam. But when it's Rafa, it's different.

Caught me a little bit by surprise that he announced it because I was maybe thinking he would give it one more try during the clay next year. At the same time I know he's been struggling with a lot of pains and injuries. It just tears you also down mentally. At some point you call it a day.

I think it will be a nice finish for him. It's going to be sad and there will be some tears obviously. As a big fan myself, I hope they make it to the final and you get to watch him at least for a few more days. I hope he has the kind of retirement that he deserves.

Just the best for him for the next.

**Q. Yesterday Daniil was talking about the change in balls on tour. It's made things a bit challenging for him. Some other players, as well. Have you noticed any new trend in the balls, whether that suits your particular game style or not?**

CASPER RUUD: The thing with the balls is for me, how I look at it, each tournament has the right and possibility to have whatever ball they want to play with, which sometimes can be an issue.

I understand if you have a stretch of four tournaments in the same continent and they all use four different balls, it can be difficult and challenging.

At the same time you have certain players they like the ATP Dunlop ball, some players they prefer the Wilson ball, some players they prefer the Tecnifibre ball.

If you just stick to one ball, it would be in a way a bit unfair

for whoever likes the Tecnifibre ball. It will give less chances to a guy who prefers a Wilson over a Dunlop ball.

In a way it's the beauty of the game. It's nice because you'll have different winners. Personally, let's say I don't really like the Penn ball. I can say it out loud. Luckily for me it's only used in Indian Wells. It is not like I don't need Indian Wells to change the balls because I think whoever likes Penn ball, good for them. When they come to clay and a Dunlop ball, I'll prefer it. Maybe a player doesn't like that ball.

For me it's challenging. I feel also on an indoor hard court, when it's rough and kind of grainy on top, they fluff up a little bit too much.

It's difficult because you have all the players kind of ripping the ball these days. The balls don't last maybe the way they used to do or with slicker courts. I understand and I get also I think the balls get too fluffy and big at times.

Different balls kind of gives the opportunity for different and other more players kind of having potentially a good week and liking that particular ball.

So let's see what happens in the future. I think there maybe needs to be somewhat more consistency with the ball. At the same time I think it also leads to more opportunities when you have different balls at different tournaments.

**Q. When you consider your record against Alcaraz, you won one set out of the four previous matches, how do you go into a match like today? You said you served well, et cetera, but was there anything specific, maybe mindset or whatever, that got you over the line this time?**

CASPER RUUD: Well, I think it helped getting a good start. Already in the first game I was facing break points in my serve. Kind of good for me that it didn't start off with a break. Then I was able to keep it. I won most of the close games in the first set, kind of all of them, and I saved a lot of break points.

With Carlos, it's like so difficult to play him because you know that he has the potential to hit any shot. Any given point, he can play like a ridiculous point.

Luckily for me today, a little bit more often than not, he also did some unforced errors. Particularly in the last game I remember when I was serving for it, I won the first point with an ace, next point he hits a beautiful backhand winner, next point is a backhand unforced error, next point I think is a volley winner. So it's on and off.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

When he's on, he doesn't do the unforced errors, he's almost unplayable, at least in my eyes, because he's everywhere and you makes you suffer if you don't hit like basically the line.

Luckily for me he's getting some unforced errors. The game plan was to be as aggressive as I can. But it's not the nature of my game. I'm hesitating a little bit when I need to be too aggressive. But I'm trying.

Serve and returning well on the break points just helped me out today a lot.

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