

Nitto ATP Finals

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Turin, Italy

Inalpi Arena, Torino

Casper Ruud

Press Conference



J. SINNER/C. Ruud

6-1, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Casper, tough match, but still a great run. What do you think was missing today?

CASPER RUUD: Thank you.

Well, first of all, Jannik is playing extremely well from every corner of his game, if I can say that. Serving well, returning well. Every kind of groundstroke feels like rockets are thrown at you. That's tough.

Unfortunately, I didn't serve good enough today. I don't think necessarily would be the key to have any, let's say, real chance of beating him. But the serve was missing, first-serve percentage. If you don't make many first serves against him, it's going to be even tougher.

When you have this feeling on court, it is normal you get a bit stressed and you maybe overplay a bit, go for too much. That was the case tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions.

Q. Sorry if I put it on Jannik, but I wanted to ask you in your opinion what is the most impressive thing in his game?

CASPER RUUD: I mean, today I found that he was playing great offensive and also great defensively. Felt like he was moving better than sometimes you might expect from him because he's a quite tall guy. He's strong because he plays long matches and has no problem. When you look at him, he doesn't necessarily look like a body builder, you know? I think he also knows himself.

He's really fast on the court. He can get to many balls. I felt like even some points I was throwing him from side to side, he was defending and sliding around really well. Was really impressed with everything from his game.

I haven't played him in three years. Everything in his game improved. I mean, this year it seems like he stepped up with every aspect, or even from last year, end of last year. It's really fun to watch. It's difficult to play.

I admire Jannik a lot as a player. As a person, he's very serious about what he does. Yeah, it's inspiring. Even though he's younger than me, I have a lot to learn from him.

Q. What did you learn from today's match? You say the serve was missing. Is there any particular reason why?

CASPER RUUD: Well, if I could, I would serve 100% first serve. I don't know. I guess I maybe didn't find my rhythm exactly with my serve. It was a tough start. I mean, I think the first 15 minutes of the match Jannik was not making one error, some really good points, and all of them went his favor. It's normal that I feel a bit, Whoa, what should I do here?

I think I learned that I need to serve better next time I play him. Also try not to stress. I mean, if he plays winners from backhand, forehand, you have to applaud and say 'too good' sometimes. This has been the case in many matches I watched Jannik: he's playing almost too good for most of the opponents. Yeah, it's really impressive.

He goes for his shots fully committed. Something I definitely can learn, as well. Sometimes I'm maybe hesitating a bit. Especially on this surface, I don't necessarily dare to go as aggressive as what he does.

There's a lot of things I can learn from him and also from today's loss.

Q. Why do you hesitate?

CASPER RUUD: It's just my game style. I learned tennis the way I learned for 20 years. I didn't learn tennis going for winner on the first or second shot. My mentality, how I grew up playing a lot on clay in Spain, it was a different way of playing tennis.

It's more kind of sometimes a bit of a waiting game, more patient tennis. I feel that might punish you against someone like Jannik.

I mean, if you look at the stats this year, I won over 50 matches and I lost 20 or something. All in all it's a good way of playing tennis.

Against someone like Jannik, it's something missing, definitely felt today and something I will know next time I play him. Hopefully it's not three years until the next time (smiling). I will have a fresher memory of what it's like to play him.

Q. You haven't played him in a few years and said his shots felt like missiles. How hard do these shots feel? How much harder than the other players'?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, it's difficult 'cause you feel like unless you hit a ball with really good depth or close to the sidelines, and even if you hit close to the sidelines but not fast enough, he's going to rip it back at you. You know that keeping depth and a heavy ball is really important.

You know as soon as you don't necessarily hit your spots, he's going to be there and try to punish you. And most of the times it works well. Of course, he does also unforced errors like every other player, just not that many. He hits beautiful shots.

So yeah, it's stressful. For a split of a second every time before you hit a shot you know, if I don't get this right, I might be punished on the next shot.

It's also mental. It comes to a part where mentally it's difficult 'cause it's stressful.

Q. Can we compare this Jannik to the Djokovic that you faced in the past?

CASPER RUUD: No, I don't think so, in my opinion, because they play different tennis. I mean, I think on TV it looks probably similar the way they play. But Jannik hits a faster ball than Novak. He doesn't let you breathe. With Novak you can play rallies. Not going to say easier to play Novak because he's the best in the history. At least with Novak you can play more rallies and not be terrified of Novak ripping, like, a bomb down the line or cross-court or these things.

I don't necessarily like to compare players because everyone has their own style. For me, you don't realize how fast Jannik plays unless you watch him play live and you're there in the stadium. On the TV, it's not fair, the speed.

I got to practice with him here earlier leading up to the tournament. He also kicked my ass there. In a way I knew what I was facing today. Sometimes you feel like players might play even better in practice because they play with no pressure and such things. But today he played really well from the beginning until the end.

I mean, I didn't get a good start so I get stressed and overplay a bit. Even the points I played really well, he was there defending well. I ended up doing a stupid mistake at the end.

It was all in all just not my day. I'm not going to say I would have won if it was my day. Yeah, I hope I can play Jannik more in the future 'cause it's a really fun challenge even though today I lost badly.

Q. You explained very well how tough is to play against Jannik, finding the weapons to try to beat him. You fight. Break points or 0-30 in the second set. Then what happened? Jannik raised even more his level. We were wondering today with Zverev in the pressure points what really a player can do. How can a player to raise his level on something like that?

CASPER RUUD: Just try to raise it even higher yourself. It comes to a point where you wonder if tennis can be played any better than certain levels you can see in a match.

Of course, you can say that you can hit every shot on the line, but that's not going to be possible in the end to do time and time over.

Jannik has stepped up, I think he's done it all week, when he had to. It's not like I had any big lead or anything today. I saw one of the first matches against Fritz, there were some close moment, and he played really well points.

Today was unfortunate. Maybe if I get the break back in the first set, 3-1, 3-2, I'm not going to say it would have made a big difference, but at least some confidence for me.

I had one passing shot I overhit it long. Exactly like I said earlier, you feel like, This is my chance. You think about it for a 10th of a second, then you do something in your body and you overplay.

I guess Jannik has not felt those same feelings a lot this year because every time he needs to step up, he's able to do it.

Yeah, I just really am impressed with how he's kept his

level high for every week and every tournament this year. I mean, he lost only six matches. It's quite interesting, because three of them is against Alcaraz, and three others are with Tsitsipas and Daniil. Who was the other one?

Q. Rublev.

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, only top-10 players. It's almost a perfect season. Yeah, I hope he calms down for next year (smiling).

Q. Rafa is playing some of his last matches coming soon. You seem like a player who has borrowed some elements of his style. How would you describe his impact on the style of tennis played by your generation?

CASPER RUUD: I think if you look at the top 10 or we can say even top 100, I think the minority of the top 100 are players that kind of prefer to play on clay, let's just say. I really like it. I think it's a soothing surface to my game definitely. There's always a lot of talk about surface and so on.

Watching Rafa play good tennis on clay is really satisfying for me at least because you know that it's not only, like, serve plus-one, ace here, winner there, mistake there. There's rallies almost every point. I find that interesting to watch.

I just love the way he's been able to kind of run around and set up his forehand, whip it and start punishing the opponent shot after shot after shot after shot, back to you. That's kind of the way I learned playing tennis, playing margins inside the line with topspin making sure the ball goes in.

Yeah, I've definitely been kind of shaped by watching a lot of Rafa tennis. Also a player we saw yesterday or the other day retired, Domi. He's been the closest to Rafa, after Rafa, the way he played on clay. I really loved watching those guys play. I find that way of playing tennis really nice. I like it myself.

But the majority of the season is played on hard court, a faster surface. It is a game style that is kind of vulnerable to hard-hitters, fast players.

Like I've said, I'm always trying to improve. In my eyes, it's too late to kind of change what kind of player I am at this point. I'm 25. The structure of my game is already there. I'm not going to start playing super flat or different style of tennis now.

I need to be able to flatten out the shots a bit more and

also be able to kind of - I don't know how to explain it - but from defense, especially on hard court, be able to take a bit more risk.

I think we can see it well with Jannik sometimes, even Alcaraz sometimes, these guys that play really well. You feel like you have them, they can turn around the point with one shot on the run, even from the forehand or backhand. I feel like that is something definitely missing in my game on the faster hard court. That's something in the next weeks and months I'll try to keep working on.

But I'm not going to change my game in one day or one week. It's going to take time. It's definitely a goal for me to be able to flatten out the shots more, as I know the majority of the season is played on hard court.

In terms of Rafa, he made it. He won two Wimbledons, what, four US Opens, two Australian Opens, Olympic gold on hard court. It's not impossible. It's just a surface that might be a bit more challenging and a bit more vulnerable to the aggressive players.

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