

Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters

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Stefanos Tsitsipas

Press Conference



S. TSITSIPAS/A. Rublev

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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please, for our champion.

Q. Can you put into words how it actually felt on court when that last point was played, then when you lifted the trophy, your first Masters 1000 title.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Nerve-wracking. It wasn't easy. I had to play great tennis to reach that moment of the match. It was all about fighting in the end. The last point was just trying to play as deep as possible, press if the ball comes short. Yeah, I was doing exactly what I had to. The intentions were right. That gave me the last shot, which landed out.

I think the rest, I just can't describe it. It was unbelievable. So many things went through my head. So many memories came back from when I was a child. It's incredible.

I like expressing myself and showing emotion. I've seen players not react to their wins like this. It makes me feel good about myself. I need that.

Q. You were super solid the whole match. In the past you've had a lot of tight matches with Andrey, whether in Roland Garros or this one. Both times you kind of dominated. How were you able to produce your best tennis, given the emotions you're describing, how big the occasion was?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Well, tennis is there. It all starts from mental. If mentally I'm able to concentrate on each single point, not have gaps where I play one good point, then the rest of the points aren't as consistent or don't have the same quality, then that was the thing that kind of kept me away in Hamburg. Definitely a good learning experience.

It wasn't easy coming into that Roland Garros match that I had to play against him. Things were difficult. But I think

finding few potholes and executing the right game plan gave me a very important Roland Garros win. There was plenty for me to learn from there.

I'm expecting for him in our next battle to try and change things. It hurts losing. Definitely hurts losing even more in finals like this. I was very happy that I was able to produce such good quality of tennis today, kind of handle my emotions and all of my nerves the right way, which led to this incredible moment at the end.

Q. What do you respect most about Andrey's game? Where do you feel you can exploit his weaknesses?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: First of all, he's an incredible athlete. I think the things that he has done and the opponents that he has beaten shows a lot about his game, who he can be in his good days.

I think his forehand is one of the biggest forehands on the tour. He has a very good, consistent serve, which makes it very difficult to play against him. He's consistent. He doesn't give you free points. He doesn't give you opportunities to just play soft with him. You have to play deep. You have to counterattack his balls.

He's definitely one of the strongest and most difficult opponents that I faced on the tour. Never makes it easy playing against him.

Honestly, he is capable of a big game. He's capable of beating top guys on the tour. I'm pretty sure he's going to have great wins against top guys, including Djokovic, Nadal, Federer, in the future. Definitely up there.

Q. I will ask you something outside tennis. You spoke in Australia that you were in a state of nirvana during a game. This week you wrote something about religion. Which is your relationship with religion, philosophy and if you practice some kind of meditation?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Religion is a thing that has caused a lot of worse and generally has been very controversial in many ways. I'm a religious guy. I would consider myself a Christian Orthodox. I also believe you

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can take from other religions and apply it into your daily life. I find that every single religion has a purpose and story behind it that people can take.

Definitely I'm not an extremist. I've been inspired a little by Buddhism. I would say there's certain values and elements there that you can take and apply to your life. I'm pretty sure it makes your life better, more happy, fulfilling life.

Breathing is something I've been working on the last couple of months with my psychologist. I find breathing very important. Especially when I'm performing or playing, breathing helps me control myself and have full control of what I'm doing out there. Definitely something that I've been putting a lot of work in the last couple of weeks with him. Actually this week more than the other weeks, doing it daily after every single match that I played.

The other thing you said was religion, breathing. I do meditate a little bit with him sometimes, with Costas, how is my psychologist, sports adviser, whatever. So he has helped me a lot. He has helped me a lot. We've been working since the age of 12. We know each other quite well. My dad studied with him in the university. They know each other from the university years. I find this very important.

When you breathe well, I feel like your game is capable of reaching the top. If you can't breathe and you're trying to play, makes it twice more difficult to perform at your best.

Q. The rivalry between you and Andrey has been very close. For you to have been so dominant in this match, what kind of preparations have you undergone to execute the game plan as such?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Yeah, talking with my coach, trying to come up with a game plan, that's what you do as a professional player, try to find solutions. It's a constant solution solving against any player.

There's certain matchups you have with certain players that you feel more comfortable playing, let's say, depending on their game, their style, the spins or whatever.

I've had players that I would say they aren't my favorite playing against them. I always try and look what I can improve against these players and see changes that I can apply to perhaps make it more different next time.

The rivalry that I had shared with Andrey is quite significant. We grew up playing together in juniors. I didn't quite play much in juniors with him because he I think he finished with the juniors earlier than me, plus he's a year older. But I know him since we were kids. I know him. We

have developed together.

It's nice that we're able to be in the same environment now on the ATP Tour together after so many years, starting from the Orange Bowl in 2008 -- 2010, '11. It's been a long journey to be here, to be able to play against each other in a big final like this.

I'm pretty sure we're going to play each other many more times. I tell you it won't be easy. It only gets more difficult and more painful.

Q. Usually offensive players struggle a bit on clay. We know how much you like it. Do you make any specific adjustments when you have to play on clay, more speed, angle?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Yeah, angles, spin, emphasize the defense as well. You can be good at offense, but you can't be offensive all the time on clay. You can try, but you have to do it smart.

That's why I said it is characterized to chess. Chess, if you go full offense, you might pay for it at the end, so you have to do it strategically and smart and clever and wait for your turns, be patient, see the court well. That is exactly what chess is about.

It is important to have this approach when you play on clay. I've tried to come as close to that as possible. I know I'm an offensive player. That's what I do the best. But on clay you also have to have good defense. It is the most, let's say, if not the most, one of the most important things. That's that.

Q. You were very emotional at the end with your box. We know why, because your mother won here 40 years ago. Can you speak of this? This is incredible.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Yeah, this is incredible. I think first time I walked in that club, in the Monte Carlo Country Club, with my mom, I think that was when I was six years old. She showed me that name up there. I remember seeing it for the first time. I was, like, stunned. I was like, Wow, that is really cool. How cool is that?

I actually started thinking about it. I didn't think about it in the beginning of the tournament, but it came to my mind when I was playing the semifinals. I was thinking that would be really cool to be in this together, like mother like son. That's where the whole purpose came from. I feel like there was an enormous amount of willingness to want to do more in order to be there with my mom.

If there's a person I would like to dedicate -- two people I

would like to dedicate this is my coach back in Greece, who I mentioned, and also my mom, because she pushed me to aim for that.

Q. You were so enthusiastic, but at the same time you were very sensitive in reminding us of your first coach, now your mother. Do you remember your years in Galatina? Apparently you have so many fans over there. They are more fans of you than almost Italian players. And if you don't speak Italian after having been so many years playing for them, for Italy in a way?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Such a shame not to be able to speak Italian. I said if I'm going to bring Galatina to A1, I'm going to learn Italian. We reached A2, which was still an incredible achievement for such a small club in Italy next to Brindisi.

I played with them first time when I was 15, 16, 14. I played a lot for Galatina. It's incredible that we are like -- I feel like we're in a family environment there. It's quite special. I saw the other clubs. But our club kind of stands out. It has the father, the brother, the sons are all involved with the club. I really loved my years there. I would also like to give them a shout-out if they're going to see this.

I met with them and I saw them in BNL Italia a few years ago before COVID. It brings me joy and happiness to kind of relive these moments when they show up and come and support me in Italian tournaments. I love them. They're the best. The Stasi family.

Q. You trained many times in the Mouratoglou academy. How important was it for you to train here? Do you speak some words of French? You speak Russian, English, Greek.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: 'Je parle un petit peu.'

I would also like to say I made a bet with one of the French journalists back in Marseille that I'll speak fluent French, I put my hand down, if Roland Garros happens to be. You know what I mean by that. I will learn fluent French.

I promise you this is going to happen. If things go well in Roland Garros, I'll be spending much time, off time, on the tour learning French. So that is going to be a good motivational thing for me. I really want to learn French. That is a good reason. I find this a good reason.

Q. Once Novak lost early, when Rafa lost earlier than expected, there were a lot of expectations on someone to come forward, win, take their chance. How satisfied and how important to you was it that you've managed

to do that?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Well, whatever had to happen happened. I stepped up my game, brought this good game, good tennis. I didn't see no reason for me to leave from here without the trophy. I felt like I deserved it. I've put so much effort and so much concentration into it. Definitely something that I deserve.

More opportunities like this is going to show up and come up in the future, so I need to be ready to show my consistency and prevail with that.

Q. Obviously the ATP has had these epic rivalries between Roger and Rafa, Roger and Novak, all three of them, with Andy as well. How important do you think it is to have new rivalries that can rival those rivalries from your generation? Do you imagine you and Andrey Rublev would form a rivalry like that?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: We have a rivalry already. It's building up. I don't know what's a rivalry, what's considered a rivalry. What, 30 matches? We're going to get there for sure if we play against each other so frequently. I don't see no reason for us not to be there.

I'm sure I'm going to have not just a rivalry with Andrey. You see back 15 years ago, 10 years ago when Nadal and Federer built one. I feel like in our circumstances, the way it's going to be in this era, there are going to be much more rivalries than just one. It won't be singular. Me with Zverev, me with Sinner, me with Berrettini. There are going to be a lot of rivalries out there. I think this variety that tennis is going to receive is going to make it really exciting.

Q. You're going to lead the race on Monday. What does that mean to you?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: That is great. It's just the beginning. We still have plenty of tennis to be played this year. Great to be in the lead. I'm not trying to think of it too much because, again, many tournaments in front of me, ahead of me. I'm going to try to recalibrate, refocus. Attention is now in Barcelona.

My body is feeling good, which is a good sign. I'm really pumped to go for some more points the last couple of weeks. In the next couple of weeks, not the last ones.

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