

# Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters

Principality of Monaco

Sunday, 10 April 2022

## Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: As you already know, Novak will be No. 1 next week for Week No. 365, which is seven years. It's 12 weeks short of the all-time tennis record of Steffi Graf. How do you feel about that milestone coming up?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, of course I'm very pleased and very happy with that milestone, although I didn't expect myself to be No. 1 without playing really tournaments this year, but I guess I was lucky.

I'll take it. You know, being the No. 1 in the world is the highest achievement that you can have in our sport, so obviously, you know, I'll try to maintain that position as much as possible.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

### **Q. Can you talk about your eagerness to play competition after so long without it?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, you know, I'm very pleased to be here, and Monaco has been home really for over ten years. I was really based here for over a decade, trained at this club, both hard courts, clay courts, so I know people at this club very well. Sleeping at home obviously makes the experience even better.

I have all my family here. Of course I have been eagerly waiting for the moment when I will be out in the competition tournament again, so this is the best place where I could possibly start.

### **Q. Three months, three matches. How is it possible to adapt to this very strange context?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I hope it won't be six months, six matches (smiling).

Yeah, obviously I miss competition. I still feel motivation to be on the tour and compete with young guys and try to challenge the best players in the world for the biggest titles.

Obviously last four, five months have been really challenging for me mentally and emotionally, but, you

know, here I am and I try to leave all of that behind and move on.

Clay court is the surface in which I grew up in Serbia and played many years only on that surface actually, and historically hasn't been my most successful surface, but I have had some big success on clay. Of course Roland Garros win last year is still fresh in my memory, so I try to use that as an inspiration to kick-start the clay court season best possible way.

I intend to play, you know, full clay court season according to my schedule of the previous years. I understand that I probably won't be at my best particularly at the beginning of this week, so, you know, am still testing my engine, so to say, and building my game, so it will take obviously some time, some matches to really get in the groove and find the competitive play that I really need.

So Roland Garros is the ultimate goal in clay court season, but of course I want to do my best in every tournament.

### **Q. You have mentioned that you are moving on. It's been a hard year for you. Can you maybe talk a little bit more about how you overcame these emotional and mental challenges? What did you do? What were you doing to help you move on? Where will you say you are mentally right now?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I think there is two parts to it. The first, obviously the one that you are experiencing on a daily basis and trying to, you know, move on from that, trying to leave it behind, trying to, you know, transform that energy, so to say, in more positive energy that will serve you for whatever is coming up in the future.

I try to be optimistic in life, and I consider myself a very optimistic and positive person. I take whatever lessons are, you know, available in every single experience, particularly in something as large as what has happened particularly in January.

Then there is the second part to it which is related to the tournaments. Once I start playing official matches in tournaments, then I will, you know, obviously have to deal



with everything that probably has been dormant inside and is maybe waiting to come out (smiling).

I'm trying to deal with it on a daily basis or weekly basis, whatever. If something surfaces, you know, I acknowledge it but I move on. It's not something that is bothering me on a daily basis, so to say. I don't feel like it has left huge scars on me that I'm unable to train or participate in tournaments or live my life. I mean, far from that.

But it has definitely been a very challenging few months and something I never experienced before. So I will try to use that as a fuel for what's coming up.

**Q. Were you dreaming to come back in a place, an area, where is a free zone for vaccine and these kind of things? Were you dreaming about it? And also, another thing about Sinner, did you expect he was going to split up with Ricardo Piatti, who was also your coach years ago, and what was your reaction?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I didn't understand your first question. Could you repeat again, please?

**Q. If you were dreaming about finally coming in a country where is sort of freed zone from the vaccine and they don't ask you to get vaccinated?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, I wasn't dreaming. I was, you know, hoping I can be wherever I can be and play in the tournaments. This is the case now in Monaco and most of Europe, actually, so I'm glad for that.

In terms of Sinner/Piatti splitup, I'm not obviously aware of what is the reason. But it was a surprise, because obviously Sinner being with Piatti quite a few years and getting to top 10 and doing all the big things with Piatti in his corner. Of course he's a grownup man, so I'm sure he knows what he's doing.

**Q. Roland Garros recently announced that they would do away with the extended final set and they would be playing a tiebreaker, a super-tiebreaker at 6-All, and all of the four majors will now be aligned. Did you know that? Because most players didn't. What are your thoughts on not having that extended play anymore? Do you have your most memorable tiebreaker that you can think of that you played?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I'm aware of that. Obviously there is history to the extended play in the fifth set in most of the slams. The one that obviously stands out is Isner/Mahut, the longest-ever match. Of course it's written down with golden letters in the history of tennis. Many people remember that match, and it has brought a lot of attention

to our sport, you know, in the wider audience, so to say, other sports and et cetera.

But I think in the grand scheme of things, I agree with the tiebreak in the fifth set, so I support that decision from all the slams.

The one that I remember the most vividly, so to say -- are you referring to the tiebreak at 6-All for me?

**Q. Yeah.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I remember I played one really good five-set match where I won 7-6 in the fifth against Stepanek in US Open very early in my career. That's one of the matches that comes to me right now. And of course against Roger 12-All in Wimbledon few years ago, but it's obviously not 6-All, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

**Q. Thank you for answering in French. This week you heard that Jo was retiring after the French Open. He was important to you during your career. What memories do you have of him? What does he represent for you?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: He has a lot of charisma, a lot of positive energy. I believe Jo was one of the nicest guys we had in our sport for the past 20 years. He was very important for our sport.

It's sad news. But I believe he knows his body perfectly well, and that's why he made this decision.

I wish to him and his family a lot of happiness. I know he has a tennis academy not far from Mr. Mouratoglou's. I'm sure he will do well once he is retired.

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