

Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters

Principality of Monaco

Sunday, 10 April 2022

Gael Monfils

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Unfortunately, Gael is retiring from the tournament because of an injury to his right ankle. He's going to explain what the injury is.

GAEL MONFILS: Good afternoon. I have to explain. I have had pain for several days now. In fact, since Miami my foot was hurting me and I had a good week of practice here in spite of that. Every day I was being very careful and following up on this, so we had a last MRI here with the doctors and my team. Apparently it doesn't make sense for me to play.

At this stage of my career, it's better for me to get some rest to make sure I can try to obtain the major goals I have, as you know, so unfortunately I have to retire from the tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French?

Q. Good afternoon. Recently we heard that Jo was retiring. You have been close friends. You have had your whole career together. How did you hear that? Did he tell you? Did you know about it? What do you think about it?

GAEL MONFILS: We were talking about it a little, of course. I knew about it because he had told us a little bit before he announced it officially. But even if he told me before, it was not official.

When he announced it officially, I sent him a text saying, Oh, my God, that's real now. Because of course we were talking a lot about it, but he was always telling me it was a secret, and deep inside I don't really want him to stop, not now.

But of course I can understand all the reasons for this decision, this "unfortunate" decision. So what we need to do is celebrate every moment we can spend with him now. Yesterday I practiced with him. Even if my ankle was hurting, I said I need to do that. It's the last moments that we can have together as players. Of course we are friends for life, but now it's the last moments as players. It's tough, because he's my friend and I am experiencing this as a fan

boy. I want to see him play a bit more.

The last years were tough for him physically. He had problems and wasn't able to give it all. He didn't have the results he really wanted. Compared to all the career he had, his latest results are not up to par.

So it's really not easy, but I'm very happy for him. I see he's very calm and he's okay with this decision, so I have absolutely no worries about the end of his career.

Q. Jo said, Gael told me I was his role model, it's the greatest compliment I could have.

GAEL MONFILS: Well, with other players, we always had Jo as a role model since we were very young. He was a locomotive, as we say. He was the older brother, the person we looked up to, even if we only had one year difference.

I was never happier than when I was selected in the French National Team and I could play with Jo and Mathieu Montcourt. It was fantastic to be on the French team with Jo. It was incredible.

At the INSEP Center we were practicing with Marc Gicquel. He was the only one who was allowed to have his cap backwards, and you're 14 and you look at him and you think you want to be him. He always was on top or ahead.

We more or less broke through in our careers together, so we were watching each other, and sometimes when I thought he served one kilometer faster than I do, we had a real battle going on, and I always wanted to do like him.

He had discipline and a love for the game that was an example for the younger players. So that's why we saw him as a role model.

Q. Jo is the first one of your generation to retire. There will be others to follow. There was that message from Gilles saying, I'm coming, my friend. So how do you see the future since Jo announced his retirement? Did you talk about it with Gilles who seems determined at some stage to quit also?



GAEL MONFILS: Well, we are talking about it openly all together, and even we made jokes about it, like, My God, you're not even able to run, what are you doing here, for example? It's real jokes.

But in the end we are all tennis lovers. We love this game. Giving up is not easy. Gilles likes doing sports. He likes hurting and working hard, so it's more difficult for him because Gilles has a game that needs very good physical condition. He can't have free points on his serve like Jo. He still wants to play.

I think it's beautiful. Of course his results are not as good as the ones he had in the past. It's always a tough decision in the end of your career, because there are our own expectations and the expectations of the fans. But Gilles is enjoying it. He lost second round in a challenger. Well, let him be. He's happy that he's been working out, that he's made the effort.

And Richard is the same. But honestly, Richard was playing well in the beginning of this season. Last year we thought he was not doing so well with his back, but now he felt better.

Maybe I'm the only one that is in a different position. I'm fresher physically, and my wife is pushing me a lot. My fun is a bit different than their fun. So normally, if everything goes well, I should be the last one to give up.

Q. I wanted to know if you would like to be the last one to give up?

GAEL MONFILS: It's not that I would like to. But I do believe I will be one of the last ones. I want to play at least four more years. I don't think Gilles will play another four years and Richard, either. Including this year, it means five years for me. I want to go to my 40s.

That's why I'm taking care of my body. When I have pain somewhere, I try to manage it wisely, but easily for four years I will still be a problem for all those young players.

Q. If you have to play Jo in the French Open, is it good or bad?

GAEL MONFILS: Well, I thought about it. Knowing myself, it will be very difficult for me to play against him. It would be very tough for me.

I would be extremely disappointed if I had to play that match. Honestly it would be so difficult to play against him.

I don't know if I could beat him with my game or if he would

beat me, but on my side it might be a match that I'm not going to play well anyway. I hope it won't happen.

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