

Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters

Principality of Monaco

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Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



A. DAVIDOVICH FOKINA/N. Djokovic

6-3, 6-7, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. Did you expect such a difficult match when you returned? That was a hell of a game out there and a very, very tough one.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I would like to congratulate Alejandro. He was the better player. He managed to find a better rhythm I think in the first two sets. I was hanging on the ropes the entire match. I was really chasing the result constantly.

You know, can't speak too much about my chances. Had some games where I was breakpoints, game points, and I just lost many of those games in the first set, also second.

But he could have won this match in straight sets, and I just kind of fought my way through to the third, but then I was just physically, completely -- I collapsed. You know, I couldn't move anymore.

Q. If you could start this year all over again, what would you do differently?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, I don't do those "what ifs." It is what it is. Obviously disappointing to lose a match and to feel this way on the court.

But again, I'm not gonna stop here. I'm going to keep going and hopefully build my form for Roland Garros. You know, that's the big goal of the clay season.

Look, I knew a few days ago when I spoke to you I knew that it's going to take some time for me to really feel my best on the clay. I mean, that's historically always been the case. Never played very well in the opening tournaments of the clay season.

But it's okay. You know, obviously it is what it is. I have to accept the defeat and keep working.

Q. Are you disappointed, or do you think it's a normal process after all of what went on?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, of course I'm disappointed. No one likes to lose. We are professional athletes. This is what we do. We go out on the court to compete and try to win against each other.

Yeah, I didn't like the way I felt physically in the third. I just ran out of the gas completely. Just couldn't really stay in the rally with him. I mean, if you can't stay in the rally, not feeling your legs on the clay, it's mission impossible.

So I don't like that, that kind of feeling I experienced in the third, but, you know, I'm going to look with my team into reasons why that was the case and go back to the drawing board and hopefully next week will be better in Belgrade.

Q. You probably are disappointed but not too surprised. I'd like to know if you were surprised in a way by the fact that the crowd again was very much against you at the beginning, at least until you won the second set. It has happened many times to you when you played Federer and other players. You're No. 1 in the world. Why do you think this happened? Do you think because of what happened this year or not?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: To be honest with you, I had a completely different perception from you. I didn't feel that they were against me. Actually, the crowd was very nice and was good reception.

Look, I mean, they cheered for both players, some good points. He was double break up, he was playing well, and look, I didn't mind. Honestly, you know, I have had much more hostile environment in my life, in my career. So this was great. I mean, I thank them for staying three hours.

Q. You told us on Sunday that you expect on the court some of the issues you have been going through in the past months to appear as you live through these moments after the drama in Australia in particular. You mentioned your physical struggles through the match, but there seems to be also a few conversations

that you had with yourself. Was that part of a bit of a mental struggle, as well? Did any of those issues surface today?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: In terms of conversation with myself, it's not the first, not the last time I do that. It's normal in a match when you're frustrated with certain things. You have different reactions.

I thought in terms of, you know, behavior, I thought I did well. You know, I always believed that I could come back and win the match, and I stayed there even though a lot of things were against me in terms of how I felt on the court. Game-wise, physically I was just far from my best.

So of course in those types of conditions and circumstances, then you have to really work two times more than you normally would. And again, I played a clay court specialist. He had a match already on center court a few days ago.

You know, I expected this match to be really tough match, physical battle, and that's what it was. Unfortunately I'm on the shorter end of the stick, and my week ends here. I have to try to be optimistic and build, as I said, to Roland Garros and where I want to peak.

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