

BNP Paribas Open

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Ons Jabeur

Press Conference



O. JABEUR/A. Kontaveit

7-5, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Ons, if you could walk us through your match tonight.

ONS JABEUR: Honestly a great match, great fight. Always tough to play against Anett. I tried to play my game little bit, but she knows me so well. It was kind of tough to kind of execute those dropshots.

I'm pretty glad that I stayed calm when I needed to be. It was very stressful at the end. But I'm glad that I got the win and looking forward to play. Why not get the title here?

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Looking at all these interviews since you were 16, even then you were saying you wanted to be top 10 and were determined. Are you able to grasp the magnitude of your achievement or is it difficult because it's mid tournament? How are you feeling?

ONS JABEUR: To be honest, I wasn't looking at the ranking. I was looking more at the race at the beginning of the tournament. Like this is a dream coming true. This is something that I've been wanting, like you said, maybe you knew me when I was 16. Even before, I always wanted to get there, to be No. 1 in the world.

Top 10 I know is the beginning. I know I deserve this place from a long time since I was playing well. But I want to prove that I deserve to be here, I deserve to be one of the top 10 players.

There is a lot of things that I need to improve. I'm very happy, a lot of emotions right now, but I'm still in competition so I'm trying to calm down and not overthink about top 10. Probably will celebrate after the tournament.

Yeah, I just believed in myself, I worked hard, and this is just the beginning of great things.

Q. I'm seeing Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova

and Andy Murray are sharing the news, saying how cool it is. Did it take you by surprise at all? How does it feel to get that kind of recognition?

ONS JABEUR: It means a lot. I honestly did not expect Andy Murray or Navratilova or Billie Jean King to, you know, tweet about me. It's unbelievable. Just it shows how important it is to me to achieve this. Being recognized by legends, honestly, it just gives me even more the power to work harder and be like them one day maybe, a Grand Slam champion.

I came here stressed a lot with the race. I know so many players were playing here. Like I said I really didn't look much at the ranking, but I knew I was kind of not far. I was talking to my mental coach and I told her, This is too much. But I told her, I need to do this, I need to go through this to be able to win a Grand Slam one day. To go and win a Grand Slam, you need to kind of take this step.

I am trying to take these steps. I'm trying so hard to calm myself down and handle all this stress because I want to be a Grand Slam champion. If I want to do that, then I need to go through this. Hopefully I'll go through this without having a heart attack (smiling).

Q. Obviously you're not done yet. A lot of people don't realize when you're not residing from a European country or United States or Australia, tennis is a little bit more challenging. The big events are played in Europe, more support, foundations. Coming from your part of the world you had to deal with things. Can you speak to that, maybe how that also toughens you up.

ONS JABEUR: It is a very good question.

Yeah, it is much different to come from my country than being American or French or Australian. They have not just the example of seeing players playing in front of you, more tennis clubs, even more tournaments, let's say.

I've been rejected by sponsors because of where I come from, which is so not fair. I didn't understand why before. I accepted it. I dealt with it. I am really proud of the person I became today, just not relying on others.



Everybody had like probably a difficult career. I'm not saying I have the most difficult one. I just wanted to really do this. It's my dream. I didn't want to depend on a sponsor or someone who doesn't even care about tennis or doesn't even care about sport in general.

Yeah, it gave me the courage to continue and achieve my goals, and I'm in top 10 today.

Q. You talked about being on the road since Cincinnati.

ONS JABEUR: Montreal.

Q. Tell us about your team who care about you and how you're making the road your home for a while. It's not easy.

ONS JABEUR: Yeah, I care about my team, too.

Yeah, I mean, I have an unbelievable team with me. First of all, they understand me. It's very helpful that we speak all the same language and we came all from the same country because we understand what it means to be Tunisian, to be on the tour.

Thankfully my fitness coach is my husband so it's easier to stay away from home. My tennis coach is someone that I know from years ago. He's like a brother to me. We're like a family, a family team. We travel together.

The key is we communicate a lot and we talk about what's happening and what's not. We were not really happy after the US Open. We expected that I go further and do better results. But it is what it is. I cannot play amazing every week. That's tennis.

Yeah, we decided to stay in New York, practice there, have a mini pre-season, kind of reflect on what happened in Montreal, Cincinnati, US Open, and then get ready for kind of the last push of the season.

I'm very happy that we took the right decision to stay there and not go to Europe and come back and be tired with the jet lag. We kind of sacrificed being at home, but it was worth it.

I am glad we all understand each other and we know kind of what's good for me and what's not. This is very important.

Q. Sorry I congratulated you the other day on making it to the top 10.

ONS JABEUR: Don't be sorry, it's good. I manifested it before (smiling).

Q. Was that tricky at all because a lot of people were talking about it on Twitter, she's not quite there yet? Did that play in your mind at all? Something had you to chat with your mental coach about?

ONS JABEUR: Even now I don't understand how if Kerber gets to semis how I don't get the top 10 even if I stopped here.

I know I had things under my control. I was going to do my best anyways. But deep inside if I was not going to get the top 10 now, I know I'm going to get it after. I'm in the right path. I'm working hard. A lot of things going on between the top 10, the race. A lot of things at the same time just to take, maybe each point at a time.

I was not trying to think about if I win this match, I was trying to take it step by step. It's easier for me to deal with it. I'm really happy that I got in the top 10.

Q. You mentioned about your mental coach, having those conversations. You're excited because this is the kind of pressure you want to have more of. How would you grade yourself on handling it this week?

ONS JABEUR: So far it's really well. I never been in this situation. I never played this long. Never been in top 10 before. It's a lot of things happening at the same time. This is what I've worked for, this is what I want to believe, to achieve. A lot of things at the same time.

I finally, with maturity and enough experience, am accepting this kind of pressure is a privilege, it's a pleasure to have it. When you're young, you don't know. You get too stressed, think about the stress. But it's a good thing.

I'm learning every day, trying to manage. It's not easy. Unfortunately some people, they don't understand it's not easy. I'm trying my best. I'm trying to play my game, have fun, really take pressure as a pleasure on court.

Q. A little bit about your team. When you brought them on you were vocal about you wanted to show people that you have the resources within Tunisia. I don't need an outside coach. Kind of made in Tunisia. What is the pride you take out of achieving what you have done this season? How does that make you feel that you brought them in the conversation?

ONS JABEUR: Honestly, I had to step up and say something about my team because we've been attacked a lot. Maybe you guys don't know, but mostly maybe in

Tunisia, maybe a little bit outside.

We are doing hard work. It's really painful to see people talking without knowing what's going on, all the sacrifices we are doing. It's not fair to them before me. If someone attacks my family, I become very bad. I don't like it.

Yeah, I know whatever you're going to do, you're not going to satisfy people. At least I have to say what I have to say. Issam is such an amazing coach. He proved that with me. He's someone that understands me well. We are working so hard, communicating. He's trying to know me. This is not easy. I really don't care what he did in the past, who player he worked with. I don't really care. I care about what he's doing with me.

I can have the best coach that has the best CV ever in the world and he will not do anything with me because maybe he doesn't understand me or doesn't understand my tennis. Having my husband as a fitness coach, emotions aside, I said that in Birmingham, listen, I'm improving physically. I am the player that played a lot of matches, most matches on tour, on WTA. Thank God I'm doing well.

What I got to say is I'm not going to change a winner team. We are winning. We are doing well. We are making mistakes maybe. We are learning. I am finally finding my joy, kind of the goals I've been waiting for for a long time.

So, no, I'm not going to change my team. This is the team that has my back. I have their backs. We're doing such a great work. Tunisia, from Tunisia, not from Tunisia, I don't think the passport matters here. Whatever the communication, whatever is going on between us, it's great.

Like I said earlier also speaking the same language also help. Yeah, we are doing great. Top 10. We're going to move on and do great.

Q. Your next match, obviously against Kerber or Badosa. They are in the process of playing the five-hour match you were hoping for.

ONS JABEUR: Hopefully. They always tend to finish early (laughter).

Q. Talk about the biggest semifinal of your career, a lot to manage in the next 24 hours.

ONS JABEUR: Paula plays really good. She's an aggressive player. She had such a great matches, great wins against Gauff, Pliskova. It's unbelievable what she's doing right now. She's a tough player. If she wins, it's going to be a very tough match.

Kerber has very much more experience. She's a tough player every. Gets every ball. Honestly she's a Grand Slam champion. She's playing well right now. If I play her, it's going to be a very, very tough match. Still hoping on the five-hour thing.

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