

BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, October 16, 2021

Nikoloz Basilashvili

Press Conference



N. BASILASHVILI/T. Fritz

7-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Your emotions, if you can talk about that, being in the biggest final of your career.

NIKOLOZ BASILASHVILI: Emotions are really positive. I'm really happy. I think I played pretty good tennis. In my opinion, Taylor made me play a lot of balls. I had to actually play very good tennis from the baseline to beat him.

But in general I'm happy that I was very relaxed in important moments and I could execute my shots. I was very happy for the serve, as well.

Q. What about playing Cam Norrie in the final now?

NIKOLOZ BASILASHVILI: Really interesting player. He's playing very good at this tournament. He had previous really good weeks. I will learn him today, come up with a plan for tomorrow.

But overall he's very not so nice to play with him from the baseline. He's been playing really, really smart and very good tennis. I'm looking forward. If I can play my game and be relaxed, I think I can play well.

Q. Could you talk about saving all those set points. What was the key to coming through?

NIKOLOZ BASILASHVILI: Nothing. I was little bit more relaxed actually when I was break down rather than when I was leading the score. I just got more relaxed, kind of focused on the ball, I started moving better, went low with the legs to hit the shot. I was just not missing at these moments.

I was very aggressive and more focused kind of. That's why I saved. I think very good performance from me to save those breakpoints. I was very focused. In the end it paid off.

Q. You served quite a high percentage of first serves, especially in the first set. Can you tell us about the rationale behind not hitting the first serve at full speed and starting the rally with your first serve?

NIKOLOZ BASILASHVILI: Because I'm good in the rally. I can play good tennis in the rally. My goal is not to be really slow on the first serve. I want to just be consistent on the first serve. I'm working to increase my first serve speed. Generally I'm working a lot to improve my serve.

If I can improve my serve, I can play very dangerous tennis.

Q. The importance of being the first player from Georgia to reach the final of an ATP Masters 1000?

NIKOLOZ BASILASHVILI: What it means or...

Q. Yes.

NIKOLOZ BASILASHVILI: Everything. It means a lot, obviously. I have been having good results previously, as well. Winning ATP titles, this never happened. I'm super happy I can achieve something like this, especially a country like Georgia, a very small country. Tennis is not that popular. I made my way. I passed really tough roads to get to here, so it means a lot.

Q. You had a great win over Roger. Here you're playing an American who the crowd was behind. Talk about stepping up and playing crowd favorites? Do you like playing in the desert?

NIKOLOZ BASILASHVILI: Crowd, yes, today was against me. This is normal. I was playing with Taylor. He's from California. I would expect he would have a lot of fans here. This is normal. I was just trying to stay calm.

As well, Stefanos had a lot of fans yesterday. He's a very popular player. Again, it's very normal for me. Just try to focus on my game.

To play here at Indian Wells, I don't know, I did my regular

preparation. I just worked a lot on my serve, improved my serve percentage. That's why I think I'm playing good.

I knew if I would be able to improve my serve percentages on the first and second serve and the speed, I could play good tennis again.

Q. (Question about coming from a small country and challenges faced.)

NIKOLOZ BASILASHVILI: I mean, I made my way, I passed very difficult times. I had to gain a lot of experience from playing futures, then playing challengers, move on from challengers and then to ATP tournaments. I knew I would never play in my young ages really good tennis because I needed this experience to get. I never had opportunity to get wild cards. I did not have any support from my country because obviously tennis is not popular there.

As well as financial side, I never had kind of a sponsor. I knew I had to pass those roads to get to here match by match gaining experience as well as playing quarterfinals, semifinals. This is all experience. I mean, the stress levels go really high when you play at Masters finals or semifinals.

Yeah, I mean, I'm happy where I am right now. I am calculating how I'm playing. I calculated I could play good tennis in my late kind of career, late age. Again, I told you I needed a lot of matches, a lot of experience.

I'm getting this right now. Yeah, hopefully I can play more calmly on the bigger matches in the future.

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