

BNP Paribas Open

Monday, March 14, 2022

Rafael Nadal

Press Conference



R. NADAL/D. Evans

7-5, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Do you feel your level was better today than in the first match.

RAFAEL NADAL: Not in the beginning. But, yes, improving a little bit.

Yeah, it's important victory against a tricky opponent. It's not an easy opponent to play. He plays tactically very well, using very well his slice, then playing aggressive, changing rhythms on the points.

Yeah, have been a positive win for me, no? Happy to save that tough moment in the first set, then the things went a little bit better later.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You're obviously playing strong here. You announced you're not playing in Miami. Is that for health reasons? Are you tired?

RAFAEL NADAL: I didn't play Miami for the last couple of years. I have almost 36. I played much more than what I expected at the beginning of the season.

For my body, is not good to have quick transitions from different surfaces, no? Clay to hard -- well, hard to clay. If I play Miami, I will not have time to rest and not time to make a swift transition to the clay.

I need to push since the beginning very hard, so that's dangerous for my foot, for my knees. I need to make that transitions step by step. I cannot make drastic changes like I did in the past, so that's why I decided to stop after here and to have, like, three weeks before the clay court season start for me.

Q. I know it's a completely different type of opponent from the previous round to today, but did you make any adjustments? Did you change anything going from the previous match to today?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I think my serve was a little bit better today. I don't know the percentage. Maybe is not that high. The feeling on the serve have been better.

I think I started to hit some winners with my forehand, something that the other day the forehand was not there. Today, of course, at the beginning was not perfect, but the feeling on the ball with the forehand starts to feel more comfortable and having the chance to change directions more often. That's step by step.

Today was a step forward. I have another day tomorrow to practice. So let's see. Going to be a very tough match. I don't know my opponent yet. They didn't play. But any opponent will be different kind of opponent. Both are top opponents.

There is no other chance but play very well the next day if I want to keep going. If not, I going to go back home. I hope be able to increase my level. I not far from that, so let's see if I'm able to make that happen.

Q. I don't know if you saw what happened a couple nights ago with Naomi Osaka. She had someone shout something to her from the crowd that bothered her during the match. What do you think as an athlete having to deal with those negative comments from the crowd?

RAFAEL NADAL: These kind of questions are tough to answer because in some way, I mean, the easy answer for me is I feel terrible about what happened, that never should happen.

The real thing, in the real world, that happens, you know? I feel very sorry for her. We are having, in my opinion, a great life. We are very lucky people that we're able to enjoy amazing experiences because of our life, because we are tennis players. We make money.

Even if is terrible to hear from that, we need to be prepared for that, no? We need to resist these kind of issues that can happen when you are exposed to the people, no?

At the same time, as we like a lot when the people are supporting, when something like this happens, we need to accept and move forward, no?

I understand that probably Naomi, he suffered a lot with his probably kind of issues that she has, mental issues. The only thing that I wish her is recover well from that and wish her all the very best.

But the life, nothing is perfect in this life, no? We need to be ready for adversities.

Q. A little bit of a lighter question. The world is changing. We're now able to travel quite a bit more. If you could say to an American the very best place to visit in Spain, not Mallorca, what would you suggest?

RAFAEL NADAL: I don't know. You going to like a lot of places in Spain, so I can't say one in particular.

You can visit Ibiza, you can visit Minorca. My neighbor islands are beautiful. The south is amazing. Madrid is doing fantastic.

I mean, there are plenty of places you going to have fun. I think we need people in our country visiting our country. I think we are good on this, receiving people, treating well the people. I think a lot of people who visit our country came back with very positive memories.

Q. Can you compare your level now to where you were in Australia? Does it continue to go up and up, or does it go up and down at the beginning of a tournament, you find it again?

RAFAEL NADAL: I don't know. Honestly, the things are not that clear in sport. Things change very quick. In our sport, I don't think you can answer a clear thing, I am playing very well, I am playing very bad. Things are changing quick.

You need to be ready to accept anything that can happen the next day, no? In Australia, I was playing very bad at the beginning. The first tournament, even if I won, I played a couple of very bad matches. Something that is completely normal after such a long time without competing. That was the true.

Two weeks and a half later I was playing fantastic. So I don't know. The only thing that I can say is you need to work enough to be ready if the things changes, no? If you compare my level of today to the semifinals or the final of Australia, is worst, without a doubt.

But what can happen after tomorrow? I can't tell you. Can

be bad, but at the same time can be very good.

When you are in a very negative dynamic, is very difficult to play bad one day and after two days play fantastic. You have a long dynamic that you don't normally make these very quick changes.

When you are playing very well, you have one bad day, you can come back to the high level very soon, no?

You never know what can happen. It was very important that I can win these first two matches without playing fantastic but today was a little bit better than the first day. Now I have an opponent in front that makes me play at my highest level. I know I have to do it. Sometimes is kind of mandatory thing that helps to make that happen.

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