

BNP Paribas Open

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John Isner

Press Conference



J. ISNER/D. Schwartzman

7-5, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: John is into the fourth round here for the eighth time in 14 appearances. Very solid effort today. Talk about the win.

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I mean, it was a good win. There's no doubt that the conditions were in my favor, for sure. I mean, it's a high-bouncing court. Playing right in the middle of the day. It's hot. Does a lot for my serve.

It's just a matter if I can string some return points together. I was able to and I won the match.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I wanted to ask you about some of the young Americans whether it's Sebe or Brooksby. How much do you watch those guys?

JOHN ISNER: No, I do watch those guys, for sure. I'm not going to sit here and say I don't keep tabs on them, because I certainly do. In this tournament it's very easy to watch them. I'm staying at a house here. Whenever I'm back home, it's on the Tennis Channel.

So I was home, at the conclusion of Sebe's match versus Rafa. I was chilling last night when Jenson beat Stefanos.

Definitely watch those guys a lot. I think for the first time in a while you can actually say American tennis on the men's side is very promising. There's no doubt about that.

We certainly have strength in numbers in the top 100. We have a lot of players in the top 100. There's some legitimate chatter about some of these guys coming up being really, really good.

Q. Any of those guys in particular?

JOHN ISNER: It's hard to say. Who knows who is going to emerge from that pack. Then you have the guys a bit older than them who amazingly might be considered

veterans at this stage, like Frances, Taylor, Ryan and Tommy, Macky McDonald. Those guys are still very young, under 25 years old.

To me, I think you're splitting hairs with Jenson and Sebastian. Sebastian has had a tough go this year trying to close out matches. Ultimately, I think all these experiences are going to be a good thing for him. To me it doesn't seem like he's panicking at all. His game is there. One of the most fluid games I've seen in a while.

I mean, him and Jenson? I don't know. In my estimation, maybe Sebastian has a real, real high ceiling. He just hasn't put it together this year.

Q. I apologize for bringing this up. But how much mentoring did you do with Reilly because of the obvious comparison?

JOHN ISNER: Honestly it's not as much as you would think. We of course have a lot of obvious similarities, one of which is that we share the same agent. We have that. We're very good friends.

Every time I win a match or he wins a match, we always text each other. He just texted me, Good botting out there. We love it. We've embraced that. I said, Thanks, bot. He's turned into the premier bot on tour right now. It's good to see.

We had that ridiculous match in Dallas, too, which is just stupid.

I do think he looks up to me a little bit. One of the things I've always told him is the most important thing he can do, because I know it's worked for me, is just to stay in the gym as much as he possibly can. Treat the gym more important than time on the court because it's going to keep you healthy.

From everything I hear and I see, he does that. He works extremely hard off the court, which I think is going to pay off for him as far as the longevity is concerned.

Q. Did the Opelkas ever come to you and say, John,

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here is a guy to mentor?

JOHN ISNER: I remember when my agent -- Reilly decided he wasn't going to go to college, he signed with my agent. I practiced with him at the US Open when he was probably 16 or 17. You don't really think anything of it.

Now I didn't look at him as someone that is going to be really good eventually. I just didn't really think of it. Next you know, he started to emerge. Then you can see the real strengths in his game. Of course, his serve. I think he's got a lot of things going for him. He's got a very pure backhand. He's a good mover, too.

He has a lot of room to grow as far as tennis is concerned. He gets away, he can win a lot of points defensively, but he still can be a bit more offensive on return as well.

Look, it's tough. It's not easy actually for us out there. Yeah, we do hold serve and it helps us out a lot, keeps us in matches. But it's a constant battle for us when to try to pull the trigger, when to stay back and try to force an error. There's a lot of things that guys like Reilly and I work on physically and mentally, which is very challenging.

Q. Surprised to hear you saying you were watching the Tennis Channel.

JOHN ISNER: I don't watch it at home.

Q. With your sports background, I wanted to ask you about what happened with Naomi Osaka a couple nights ago. People say tennis should be less uptight or have more rowdy fans. There's really not a lot of heckling in tennis.

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I don't think so.

Q. I'm curious of what you make of that, how players should be able to handle it or not?

JOHN ISNER: For sure, I've had some times where I've had some people riding me on the court before. You never really know how it's going to affect us out there. Everyone's different. I'm not one to say that she should toughen up and be better out there.

We're all different out there. But it is something, as you said, I don't think it's that common in tennis. It's just so easy for it to happen. You have one fan have a little bit too much beer or a little bit too much liquor, start being belligerent out there. Because it's a sport that's quiet, you hear everything.

We'll see what comes of that. I don't know. It's easy, as I

said, to say just toughen up, put it behind you. We're all different.

That was certainly a tough moment for her. She's had some issues I guess in the spotlight, as she does seem to be introverted a little bit. She's just a mega star, too. She's got to balance that.

All the players maybe dealt with this at some point. So hopefully for her this could be a good learning experience.

I think the one thing she does have going for her is the majority of people do like her and enjoy her tennis especially. She definitely should realize that's just one person out of a lot of, lot of people in the crowd that was just a bit belligerent that night.

Q. I wanted to do a lightning round, name the different strokes, you tell me the toughest people you've had.

JOHN ISNER: Okay.

Q. Obviously started with the serve, who is the toughest serve?

JOHN ISNER: I'll go with Reilly because he was most recent, he was very tough.

Q. Forehand?

JOHN ISNER: Roger.

Q. Backhand, one or two-handed?

JOHN ISNER: Novak.

Q. Volley?

JOHN ISNER: That's a good one. Obviously I think Rafa has really good volleys.

Q. Speed and anticipation?

JOHN ISNER: Novak.

Q. Mental toughness?

JOHN ISNER: Rafa. He's got that in spades.

Q. You've done well over here in the past. What do you find most comfortable about playing here? Compare how you're feeling at the moment to the past?

JOHN ISNER: I just really like the conditions here. They



suit my game. Medium-paced hard court. Kind of light air. It just really suits my game. I do enjoy being at home. Out there on center court playing at 3:00 in 80-something degrees, not much wind, I can't ask for anything better than that.

Between this and Miami, I think there's a reason why I've gotten a lot of wins at these tournaments because I really enjoy the surface and I really enjoy my time at each one of these events.

Q. You said before you felt you have optimism about American men's tennis. What would it take for us to say American men's tennis is really back? A slam title?

JOHN ISNER: No. Because the bar has been set pretty low since 2003 probably. So, no. I think getting two guys in the top 10 would be a good starting point, then you go from there.

Q. We're doing so great now, but not at the very top. McEnroe the other day said the thing that was needed was a fighting spirit. What do you think it will take to get to the top 10 or even a slam winner?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I mean, all of that. You got to fight hard on the court. That's one thing Jenson does amazingly well. I saw last night he was down 5-1 in the first set. Tsitsipas was serving. He won a point. Big fist pump. The set for all intents and purposes is over. He's got that. He's just always turned on.

I'm not going to say it's like Rafa because there's never going to be anyone that competes like him, but it's very similar. You need that, for sure.

These guys are going to continue to evolve in their games. Sebastian, when he gets in that situation, it's just going to take one or two times where he serves out a match easily, then boom, he's off and running.

Jenson, everyone talks about his serve. He's going to improve that incrementally over the years. When he does, he's going to be that much better.

We haven't talked about Brendon Nakashima as much. He hasn't done as much this year, but he's someone that I think has a bright future also. Between those guys, the older guys ranked ahead of them right now, Frances, Reilly, Tommy, Taylor, we're in a good spot.

I do think getting two players in the top 10 sometime in the near future is very conceivable.

Q. Not a lot of guys are on your size on tour. When you play Reilly, do you change your game?

JOHN ISNER: No, no, we don't change our game. We don't have that luxury to really go into our bag of tricks and change our game (laughter).

No, you hold serve, and I guess you hope that your opponent, Reilly, has a bads service game and I can break him, or really get them in a tiebreaker. That's what it really comes down to.

When I match up against other big servers, Reilly would say the same, you don't really change much. You might on a big point give him something different to look on as far as our return position to try to get a second serve or something like that.

No, us big guys, it's pretty straightforward. It starts with our serve, just try to hold our serve and go from there.

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