

BNP Paribas Open

Thursday, March 17, 2022

Nick Kyrgios

Press Conference



R. NADAL/N. Kyrgios

7-6, 5-7, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Tough luck, Nick. But even if you're disappointed now, you must be happy with how the tournament played out overall.

NICK KYRGIOS: Yeah. Obviously extremely. That one hit pretty hard. I felt like, honestly, I was the one to end the streak. I felt like I was playing well. I felt like I did everything right in the first set that I planned to do. I sat down with my coach, myself, and I had a game plan, and everything was working. Two points away from the first set, I don't know how he got out of that game. 5-4, 30-15, just kept replaying that point over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over again.

And competing, competing, somehow snagged the second and a couple points in the third that just, a couple break points. One of them I couldn't do anything on and two, I just missed a backhand by who knows, three inches. That's all it is against Rafa all the time.

So, I mean, he's too good, I guess. He played a few points well and he got out of it and that's what he does. That's what makes him great.

Q. You are obviously an emotional player, but are you aware how close you came to hitting the ball boy with your racquet after the match and what, do you have something to say about it?

NICK KYRGIOS: What would you like me to say about it? Obviously, was that my intention? No. Because I threw the racquet. Did I throw the racquet anywhere near him originally? It landed a meter from my foot and skidded and nearly hit him. I'm human. Things happen like that. Obviously it was a very unfortunate bounce. I think if I did that a million times over it wouldn't have gone that way.

And what do you want me to say? It was three meters away from the kid. That's a question you're going to say after a three-hour battle against Nadal? That's what you

come here with?

Q. Well, I saw a kid duck --

NICK KYRGIOS: He ducked. Duck. He ducked. He ducked. He ducked. He ducked. He ducked. Jesus. All right.

Well, if that's what you're going to come in here to come ask me, it didn't hit him. It was an accident. It most definitely wasn't like Zverev. It was complete accident. I didn't hit him, thankfully. It wasn't my intention. So thankfully the ball kid's okay.

Great question, though. Unbelievable stuff.

(Clapping.) Congratulations, man.

Q. You talked about these kind of matches before against guys like Nadal in a stadium like that. Just talk about what you thought about the environment out there today.

NICK KYRGIOS: Insane. That's what you dream about as a little kid, to play these events against Nadal and the hype around it. I don't see any other matches getting this kind of hype. As soon as we matched up against each other, social media's going nuts, this is going nuts, this is going nuts. I think it lived up to it. Again, the expectation, I guess episode nine, I've played him nine times now.

And it was an amazing atmosphere. I knew the crowd was obviously, every time you play against Rafa, Roger, or Novak, the crowd's going to be heavily in their favor, and I know that, and I'm not asking them to go for me. I like that kind of, I guess, the villain, underdog-type, you know, feeling. But again, it was an amazing atmosphere. I'm never going to take that for granted. Rafa's a champion. So, you know, I think we've got an enormous amount of respect for each other. At the net, we said words, and I can feel it. We respect each other and he's a hell of a player, so...

Q. You talk about atmosphere, but you had some issues with a few people different times shouting out things that were throwing you off, end of the first set



especially. When you were talking about these things happening, I don't know if you were referring to Osaka or whatever else that has been happening. What is your thought on the level of the decorum in the crowd and how much it can affect players during the matches and derail things at times for you?

NICK KYRGIOS: Well, for me it wasn't so much similar to Osaka's situation, but I definitely do think that, I don't know, like, I was actually speaking to some of the physios. Like, I'm not expecting the crowd to go for me. Like, I know when you play Rafa, like, 99 percent of the crowd is going to go for these guys. And I'm not asking for the crowd to go for me or cheer my name or go nuts for me when I'm winning or losing or anything.

I just want people to know that you're a spectator. You've bought tickets to come watch us play. At least don't scream out before first and second serve. That's all I'm asking for. I'm not asking, and that's both ways.

When I was in the Australian Open, before they were screaming, Liam Broady was serving. I told the chair umpire, I was like, tell these guys to shut up. You know what I mean? People in the crowd screaming. And I think it's just this generation. Everyone feels like their opinion is valid. Like, when you're a spectator and you're watching professionals play tennis, you should just be quiet. Do you know what I mean? Like, don't tell me how to play. Like, you could not win a single point guess Rafael Nadal. Just sit on your seat and watch me play tennis. That's it. Period.

And they think that they have some sort of right to scream out to players like they did so Osaka the other night. Like, it affects people. Like, we're only human. We're not some sort of super human with armor who, sometimes I do throw a racquet and it may get close to someone. Like, I'm not perfect, but like, what I'm saying is you can't do that to people. Like, you can't scream out and aggressively scream at people from the crowd. Like, just sit and enjoy the show. Like, we're putting on, I thought it was a decent match. I thought it was a pretty high level match and I'm just asking for a little bit of respect.

Like, I'm going out there and competing in the heat for three hours for them. Like, I came out there to play for them. Like, I just want a bit of, like, don't scream out before first and second serve. That's it.

Q. We have seen a lot of that in the NBA too with LeBron --

NICK KYRGIOS: Yeah. You see it with Westbrook and stuff.

Q. Do you think it's getting worse?

NICK KYRGIOS: It is getting worse because social media, people think that they're relevant all of a sudden. Like, you're not relevant. You have a little social media account that you type to people on. You spread negativity. It's embarrassing, and you can see how it affects people. It's affecting Westbrook. It affects people. It affects Osaka. It affected me for years and it's not okay.

Like, if you got to, I don't know. Like, it's just people just so quick to hate and, like, how can you hate on someone for just trying to be different or just going about it differently. Do you know what I mean? It's ridiculous.

So I don't know. I don't want to speak about it too much. The match was awesome, I thought. Like, obviously, in the heat of the moment, I was two points away from the first set and I felt like if I had won that first set, I was really playing, the way I was playing, I could have runaway with it. So obviously, I was frustrated, but you know, it was a hell of a match.

Q. You mentioned the exchange with Rafa at the net and the respect that's developed between you two guys. Maybe it wasn't always that way. Maybe you went after them a little bit more in years past. So is it important to you now to have that little bit different relationship?

NICK KYRGIOS: Yeah, for sure. I think our tennis always was respected between each other and I think when people actually get to know me I feel like they like they're sort of, I guess when you see me on court, compared to how I am off the court, I'm a completely different person.

Obviously this flop here doesn't know. But like it's just, I feel like we respect each other, like I think he's the greatest of all time as of now, like I really in this game have never said anything that bad, compared to if I went through my comments right now, like that's what I'm getting on a daily basis, I've never said anything like that to Rafael Nadal. I've had a couple comments and he's had a couple comments back. And, you know, it's good for the sport, like that rivalry, like I'm Nick Kyrgios and I'm a rival to Rafael Nadal. How? Like how is that possible?

And I think it's exciting for the sport, do you know what I mean? Like that's what people should be talking about. And my career's 1/40th of what he's done and we're rivals because of that little back and forth that was nothing.

Now I respect the hell out of him, but I was like a little kid watching these guys win grand slams, like I'm 26 years old,

like I'm not old. I looked up to all these guys growing up, when I was on the fence getting my ball signed when I was 12 years old, Rafa, Federer, Novak, Tsonga, like do you know what I mean? Like I feel like I'm helping the sport, I'm creating more attention and everyone who thinks that I'm bad for the sport is just an idiot. Like they have got, obviously got no idea. No idea.

Q. For the record, it's a legitimate question but you got your opinion. So, on a different topic, I feel like when we watch you play, everybody's different in tennis, everybody has different approaches. We have the impression that if you could just keep your focus at times it could make a difference against someone like Rafa?

NICK KYRGIOS: Have you played Rafa before?

Q. No, of course not.

NICK KYRGIOS: So why, why are you asking me this?

Q. I wondered whether you --

NICK KYRGIOS: No, you've implied that I was loose mentally or something today. That's what you implied.

Q. Not loose mentally --

NICK KYRGIOS: But how do you know?

Q. I don't know, that's why I'm asking you.

NICK KYRGIOS: Well what's your question though?

Q. Do you think it affects the outcome of the match when you aren't in the same kind of zone where you're focused on what you're doing?

NICK KYRGIOS: But I was focused. Just because I have an outburst doesn't mean I'm not focused. Like, to be honest, if I was watching a little kid play and he was getting angry that he was losing it just shows that he cares. I would rather someone get angry that they're losing than just cop it on the chin. Did you ever look at it from that way?

Q. How much are you planning on playing over the next two or three months, especially when the tour moves on to the clay?

NICK KYRGIOS: Thankful for the wildcard in a Miami. I obviously want to continue to keep this momentum going. I feel like I'm playing some pretty good tennis and I'm healthy, so I'm taking advantage of that while I can.

I'm going to go to Houston and play and then I'm going to go home, rest up, and probably just rest for the grass season. I'm not, I can play on clay, it's just not something that I value and I don't really I don't have any goals to achieve anything on clay or something like that. I don't really enjoy playing on it, so I'm just going to rest up and get ready for the grass. That's it.

Q. When you look at a result like this and as you saying also, points here and there that could have made a difference, and obviously I would think there's disappointment on your part that you weren't necessarily closing it out. But the way you played, what positives do you take away from what you've done this week and even this match which was so close?

NICK KYRGIOS: Well I know that my level's always there. It's just, this one hurts because I know that no matches that I played before this are going to get talked about, and it's been the story of my career.

And, you know, I played three bloody good matches, like three really good matches against quality opponents that have been playing and had a pretty good year. I beat one of the guys that had like nearly 60 wins last year and no one remembered that. And everyone will just remember that time where Kyrgios lost to Rafa at Indian Wells or the time that he threw the racquet. Like people like you spoil sport. Like people like you.

And it's like, it's not fair, but at the same time that's just the type of personality I am to the sport. People only remember the big matches I play and that's fine. I know that I'm staying true to myself, I know that I'm making small improvements, I feel healthy, my body feels good and I'll just try and continue to be positive and be better and that's it. That's all I can do. It's all I can control. That's it.

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