

BNP Paribas Open

Thursday, March 17, 2022

Rafael Nadal

Press Conference



R. NADAL/N. Kyrgios

7-6, 5-7, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Well done, Rafa. Do you think the key was saving those break points early in the final set?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, after almost a three-hour match, we can't just say about -- we can't just talk about two points, no, because that's very, I don't think that's right to say, no, because I have been playing a lot of important points over the match, so of course those two points would have been important.

But, yeah, we can talk a lot about different moments that's change, could change the dynamic of the match.

Yeah. It was a good tennis match, I think. I'm happy to win, of course. Being in the semifinals is great news for me again. Yeah, happy about that third set because it wasn't easy after that, the end of the second. It was terrible for me.

But I hold it emotionally, and mentally, I think I was ready to keep fighting. So happy with the victory and of course happy with the level of the set.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. I do want to ask you about what occurred out there today at the very end after the match when your opponent smashed his racquet and came somewhat close to the ball boy who ducked, and then there was an incident in Mexico where the umpire, where a player smashed the umpire's stand four times, and of course we know what happened in the US Open. Do you think players need to be aware of being violent and who is out there or is it just part of the emotion of matches?

RAFAEL NADAL: I didn't see that. Sorry. I can't have a clear opinion because, as you can imagine, I was on my side and I, sorry, I was not able to see that sequence of what happened.

But I really, I am not in the mood a lot to talk about this kind

of stuff because we talked about that before the tournament. You know my opinion about this kind of things. But at the end, there's an organization that are making decisions and that's it. I am a colleague of all these players, and I said, I can't repeat what I said before the tournament start, but it's true.

And so in some way I have a good relationship with all these players, and even if it's Nick, you don't get me wrong and the people can't think that we hate each other, because what happened in the past is not true at all. I don't hate him at all. And in some way I like him like a character.

But of course when you cross some lines, then the thing becomes different, no? And the problem is, in my opinion, it's the same. When you allow the players to do stuff, then you don't know when is the line, and it's a tricky thing.

But probably because this situations are happening more and more often, probably ATP should review things and make decisions. Not about today's match because I don't see. I didn't see what happened in the end, so I can't have an opinion. I think Nick had a great attitude during the whole match in terms of fighting spirit, and of course he has his personality, his character. Sometimes he does things that I personally, from my personally, personal understanding, I don't like, but I respect because of different character, different kind of points of view, and different kind of education and sometimes, and I'm not saying that in a negative way at all, just different kind of points of view.

But in the most important part of what we are coming here, it's to try to play tennis and to try to do the best way possible. I think he did. So he fought until the end. He played some great level of tennis. And that's the Nick Kyrgios that probably I want to see and the people likes to see, no? Because that's good for tennis.

And then all that stuff, I hope was nothing too bad what happened because I wish him the best. But if it's bad, I mean, ATP need to make decisions to avoid that and to stop that because sometimes, even if it's very unlucky or unfortunate, going to right in that moment that something

negative will happen.

Q. Maria Sakkari was in here earlier and she said, we were talking about being nervous on the court, and she said I think even Rafa and Roger probably get nervous sometimes on the court too. And I was curious, do you get nervous on the court ever in an intense match or before a match and what does that feel like?

RAFAEL NADAL: Everybody gets nervous and if you don't get nervous it's because, I said to, the same thing before the tournament. If somebody tells you that don't get nervous, that is two options, that this guy lies you or this guy really don't care a lot about, don't care at all about the sport because when you are doing something about, when you are doing something that you care about, it's normal that you are nervous because, and you need these kind of nerves to play well, in my opinion, because that helps.

Everybody gets nervous, I think.

Q. You've played Nick nine times now and pretty much every match has been incredibly tight and very close and exciting. Today's match, what did it feel like when you're in the middle of that match and the tension and the pressure and all and the crowd atmosphere and all was going crazy? Are you able to put into words what you were feeling and experiencing at those moments?

RAFAEL NADAL: For me, it was one more match. Honestly, no, it's another match of quarterfinals of a Masters 1000 in a big stadium, one of the best stadiums in the world, in front of great crowd, great opponent in front.

So for me it was like this, another fought match that I needed to play, to play well to go through. I enjoy these kind of matches. I enjoy the challenges. And today, I was able to keep going and that makes me happy and makes me proud.

Q. I see you keeping track on the match --

RAFAEL NADAL: Oh, it was a break point, yeah. (Smiling). Sorry about that.

Q. If it is Carlos Alcaraz that goes through, how you view him, whether you feel protective of him as another Spanish player, and how much advice he's asked from you in the early stages of his career.

RAFAEL NADAL: No. He didn't ask me anything. No, he has a great team next to him, I think. I think he's unstoppable in terms of his career. He has all the ingredients. He has the passion. He has the, he's humble

enough to work hard. No, he's a good guy. He remembers me a lot of things than when I was 17- or 18-years-old kid. I think he has the passion. He has the talent and the physical component that it's great.

And I am super happy, even, of course it's going to be a great rival for now and for the next couple of months, without a doubt. But thinking and being selfish, it's great, honestly, to have such a star from my country, because we, for the tennis lovers, we're going to keep enjoy an amazing player fighting for the most important titles for the next, I don't know how many years, a lot of years.

That's my feeling, from my point of view. That's fantastic for the tennis lovers and he's a countryman and he's a great guy. So I like him. I wish him all the very best. Probably not after tomorrow he plays against me, but in general (laughing).

Q. First set, it was Nick serving for the set. It was 30-all. He hits a 143-mile-an-hour serve down the middle of the T. You hit a return back within maybe 6 inches of the baseline and get the point. Just talk about that one point, if you don't mind, what goes through mind, and how important it turned out to be.

RAFAEL NADAL: Even it was more lucky the 15-30, the 30-15, I think, because I saved a backhand very close, close to the two bounces. 30-all, I decided to go T, and I put the racquet there, and then I played a good point, and then he make mistake in the break point.

Well, I mean, a good dynamic and winning matches in a row. So when this kind of stuff happens, I feel lucky to win that set because returning with 5-4 against Nick, the chances to win that set are, let's say, 10 percent, maybe less. I don't know.

But it happened. Yeah. I played some good points there. And to win the match, it looks like I have more or less under control in the second, and then I played the terrible game with the 6-5, and then you lose a set. That's the stuff that happens when you play a player like Nick and he's able to serve that well.

Q. There's video on social media this week about, it was sort of clip of you playing Grosjean at the French Open in 2005, the first year --

RAFAEL NADAL: Playing?

Q. Grosjean in 2005 at the French Open. It was a match where the crowd got very loud and you were blocking out and focusing and stuff. Wondering how you learned to do that from a youngster if that always

came easy to you blocking out the outside noise during matches or if it's something you had to learn how to do.

RAFAEL NADAL: I always have a very basic point of view and it's, do the things that going to helps you to play better or to win more. You can be sad, you can be very upset, but if that helps you to play better or to win more, do it.

But it's not my case. So when I am upset or I lost my concentration, I say, I am not this kind of guy. I, normally I am not, I don't behave much, no, I like to be in a positive way, not a negative way. But not on the tennis court, in my normal life too.

So, of course, I remember that match and for a moment it was unplayable, but was not my job to stop that, it was the referee, umpire job to stop this atmosphere that was not able to play tennis in that moment. But then I think we stopped for light or rain, I don't know, and then we come back the next day. But I just tried to do the things that help me to keep going.

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