

BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 11, 2023

Ons Jabeur

Press Conference



O. JABEUR/M. Frech

4-6, 6-4, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: How did you manage to bounce back after conceding that first set?

ONS JABEUR: I have no idea. I just played my game. It was tough first match after coming back after injuries. You know, just tried to play my game. It's slow, it helps, and not at the same time. But, you know, the crowd, they were amazing. They really gave me a lot of energy.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Speaking on the fact that it is your first match since Australia, since the injury and everything, how did it feel out there? How long did it take to kind of read the game, kind of snap into match rhythm again?

ONS JABEUR: Okay. You want the truth, or... Always? How much? (Smiling.)

You know, it's a tough decision to come back, and I was the one that insisted that I come back in Indian Wells and Miami. It was probably too early to come back, but I just made it a new challenge for myself.

I did regret it after the first set (smiling). But then, you know, I just told myself to accept what's happening, to fight through it, and to just see how it goes. I'm sure it will get better and better every match.

Q. Fans were going wild for you, even just at the practice court yesterday.

ONS JABEUR: Yeah.

Q. What's it like to have that many people cheering and watching every moment of a practice?

ONS JABEUR: It's really amazing, you know. It's fun to see how people love tennis here and how much they support you. They are having fun with us during the practice, even though last time I practiced with Sabalenka

it was so much fun.

You know, it feels really amazing with them. I remember playing here when COVID hit, and it was so boring, you know, without them. So I'm thankful to see also a lot of kids. They also bring a lot of great energy.

You know, just motivated to come and practice again, for sure.

Q. You mentioned that maybe this was too early to come back, but you really wanted to come back. Why did you feel like you wanted to restart at Indian Wells and Miami and not wait for clay?

ONS JABEUR: Well, a lot of things. First, I'm an athlete and it's tough to stay out of competition for a long time. I was missing to be on the court. You know, I just didn't want to go behind of the ranking too much. I missed already two 500s and a 1000 and there is two 1000s coming.

I was like, okay, I'm going to go and get prepared, even here and Miami, and see what's gonna happen. I just twisted it a little bit. I made it like a challenge for myself to see if maybe physically I'm not ready, then I can challenge my mental health or really get my brain working for once.

Q. When your new team talk about decisions related to health and injury and potential long-term effects, do you talk one year down the road, are you talking five years, ten years?

ONS JABEUR: Ten years means 38? You know, as long as I'm healthy, I'd like to play for a long time, for sure. But as maybe other teams, you always think like it's okay. Let's lose one or two months but not let's lose a year or two. So that's how my team were thinking. I wasn't thinking like that, obviously.

So yeah, that's why I wanted to come back and just compete and see what's gonna happen. Maybe if this time doesn't work I'm probably gonna learn for the next times.

Q. I assume that everything is okay with the knee and



that you can compete. Is there issues with it or was the hesitancy to come back more like I need more fitness and training just to get back to top level, or was it like surrounding the injury?

ONS JABEUR: Yeah, I mean, the knee is getting there. Physically I obviously need more time. But when the time is right, I'll tell you what was going on really. I'm sorry, I cannot talk about it right now. But it is more than that. So it was very challenging for me health-wise.

I'm gonna see what's gonna happen.

Q. Would you say right now you fully trust your knee or is there still hesitation on the movement there?

ONS JABEUR: No, my knee is, I can say 80%, it's getting there. At least the pain is not here. I'm strengthening and getting my movements back, but still my movements are not 100%, for sure.

Q. I think you have Vondrousova next.

ONS JABEUR: I do? Shit. I didn't know (smiling).

Q. That's kind of weird, given everything...

ONS JABEUR: Yeah.

Q. Is that a good thing, a bad thing?

ONS JABEUR: Well, bad thing since she's playing good. I saw she won like one or two or something. Man, I should have challenged her more.

It's going to be great match. I know how much she loves to play on this surface, so it's gonna be another challenge for me, for sure.

I saw that she was also playing good in Dubai, so let's see. For me, honestly I have nothing to lose. I'm gonna try my best to beat her.

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