

BNP Paribas Open

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Rohan Bopanna

Matthew Ebden

Press Conference



BOPANNA-EBDEN/Koolhof-Skupski

6-3, 2-6, 10-8

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the press conference of Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden, our Indian Wells 2023 doubles champions. Men's doubles, of course. First of all, congratulations, both. Since your partnership, you have been to the final in Rotterdam, won Doha, now another Masters 1000 title. First one for you, Matt. How is that happening so fast?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, thanks. Well, I mean, it didn't actually happen so fast. In January we actually took two losses first, which was tough. It's never nice to start a new partnership with some losses.

But, we lost to two really good pairs, actually. One of the pairs has won two 500s in the last six months, and the other pair have won many huge tournaments and been top of the doubles game. We had some tough draws I would say also. We had our chance to win some of those matches.

We took the losses, but I think at least we're experienced, we've been around the tour long enough to know to trust ourselves and our level and each other that we can work and improve and find our rhythm.

Then in Rotterdam, I remember I think one practice session one of the days, we just started playing unbelievable both of us together at the same time. We just started really winning a lot of sets against all the guys.

From that day, I felt, wow, I think we're really feeling good here. To the final there. We had match point actually in the Rotterdam final but we lost. We were close to winning that one.

We won Doha the next week. Dubai we had a chance to, for sure, win that match. We lost a super-tiebreak but we could have won all the sets and the super-tiebreak easily. We had the chances. That's the game. That's normal.

Then to come here and straight to the title, yeah, it's pretty great. Really great start.

ROHAN BOPANNA: Absolutely agree with Matt everything there. It always, you know, takes some time sometimes finding the right partnership. The last three, four weeks has been fantastic. Especially with the way we have been coming back from sets down when we were up a break, staying through that, staying positive.

That's the biggest key I think for the partnership. You know, maybe a little inspiration from Daniil Medvedev. He's really out there winning week in and week out and we have been playing similar tournaments as he is. (Smiling.)

Also, why not? It's always fun. When you see somebody there and doing so well.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Matt, just if you can comment, the two biggest titles of your career, Wimbledon last year and now a 1000. What does that sort of thing mean to you?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, definitely. I will even put also Australian Open, when we won the mixed doubles there, I'll put that in there as well. Last year also the final of Davis Cup was big. To try to get a Davis Cup title is definitely high on that list too. Have to try for that this year too.

Yeah, to get the first Masters 1000, super special. Yeah, didn't really have time to digest it. I heard it on the bios in the pre-match warmup, Bop's has already won four Masters, that was his fifth. Yeah, for me the first.

Yeah, I mean, maybe they call this the fifth Grand Slam sometimes, so it's definitely one you want to win. I've been coming here many years, had good success in singles here, played well here over the years but nothing quite like this (smiling).

So I think I have found my forte.

Q. Rohan, you commented on the keys to a



partnership being managing ups and downs together. I think this match had a little bit of all of that. I wanted to hear both your thoughts on this match and what were some key moments.

ROHAN BOPANNA: I think the key moments are definitely, you know, those deuce points at this level when you're playing. You know, it makes a difference whether you bring in the first serve there or, you know, because everyone is returning really well at this venue. By the time you get to the final they are all seeing the ball really well. It makes it that much harder.

So the margins are very, very slim, so, you know, and the percentages is where we are really getting through these matches, close matches.

You know, there I was, I think, trying to just go after my serve too much and I was missing it in a few inches. Then just putting pressure on myself.

After that, after we went down that second set, you know, Matt took a toilet break, it also gives a time to really sit down, take a breath, think about what needs to be done.

The biggest thing was that we started the tiebreak really well, very positive. You know, and that made a huge difference. You know, in this format of the doubles where it's a no ad scoring and super-tiebreak, there are tons of momentum shift. You just have to figure out a way and as a partnership how you're going to really focus on that and bring the positive things when it really matters.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, similar to what Bop said. I mean, it's so normal for us now, especially in the doubles format, these kind of matches, lose a set, win a set, up or down a break with deuce points or super tiebreaks. Like almost every match is like this. So we are kind of used to that, and I think the experience in those moments, it helps.

And then I think, I mean, it comes down to our practice. We practice our execution. We've been executing brilliantly these last six weeks, and the results are there to show us. On our serves in clutch moments, on our returns in clutch moments, our volleys, of course, and even our, you know, feeling each other in reading the game, our movement and all that.

But, yeah, it's a lot of work, and practicing and execution as well. I think that's the key.

Of course we are experienced enough to know it's normal that there's always a lot of shifts and we just accept it and move on, and we just keep doing our best each and every point, keep finding to come back, if we are ahead, to close

out.

That's just normal. That's just the game. We've both seen so many of those ups and downs over the years for sure that it's just quite normal.

Q. I was hoping the two of you could share how the two of you came to teaming up.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, I mean, late last year both our partners, partnerships...

ROHAN BOPANNA: Dumped us. (Laughter.)

MATTHEW EBDEN: Well, a little.

I mean, yeah, my partner stopped playing doubles, as well. He's playing basically singles in challengers and stuff. That's fine. Bop's, also, decided to play with a fellow countryman, I guess, the guy you were playing with.

ROHAN BOPANNA: Yeah.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, it got towards the end of the year and we sort of spoke and Bop said, Are you looking for a partner? I said, Yeah, I am looking for a partner.

It works well. He plays on the deuce side, I play on the ad side. He's got a big serve, he's big at the net. I'm athletic, returning well, improved my serve. We knew our level is really good, and if we could put it together, there's no reason why we couldn't.

I think, yeah, we've known each other a long time too. I've said a few times I've known Bop since he used to play singles. One time he came to Perth for the Hopman Cup I think when I was maybe only 19 and starting on the tour, and I think we practiced together. He was playing the Hopman Cup with Sania Mirza, so that's a long time ago.

We've seen each other on the tour many times over the last five, ten years at least. There was no reason why it couldn't work.

Yeah, we had to stick with it, took a couple of losses. Yeah, like you said, it can take time.

We know it's great if you come with a new partner and you win everything straightaway, great. Sometimes it can take a few weeks, sometimes it can take even a few months.

In the end it's been quite a quick transition. I think we know each other well off the court, on the court now, and it's a really good chemistry.

Q. Rohan, you have had many records throughout your career. Now you have a record for the oldest man ever to win an ATP Masters 1000 title. What are your thoughts on that?

ROHAN BOPANNA: I think it's always special when you get any record as such, but the biggest I think feeling for me is that I was able to pursue my tennis, keep it going, and still believe that I could win big tournaments. I think that has been the key, and I think, you know, having a partner like Matt to, you know, especially we decided last year was to win these 500, 1000 events, try to do well at the tournaments.

I don't think if I was ready to do that, then this would have been the right partnership, but I know I had to put in my side of the work, put in a lot of effort, then making sure that I'm recovered and playing good tennis to be able to achieve and do this.

I think that is where my strengths are. You know, constantly finding ways to figure on how I can improve. You know, and then look at the partnership on what, you know, can get better.

So I'm really happy that -- I did text Danny Nestor and tell him I'm sorry that I broke his record. He had some kind words for me, which I can't tell you.

So yeah, but it's really nice, and Dan is a close friend of mine. I've won a couple titles with him. It's really nice.

Yeah, happy any time you have anything like this, it's really special. The only person to be representing India, and I really feel proud of that. Every time I know the tournament here, wherever an athlete is from, there is a flag out there. So it's nice to see the Indian flag always.

You know, I really feel this week I got a lot of messages on, you know, how many people are still inspired with the fact that I have been able to do this and still looking to say, yes, age is, you know, not a number, as they say, but still it is possible to do it and, you know, that is what is the biggest win for me is that I'm still able to still manage and, you know, put a smile on somebody's face, you know, whether it's back home or anywhere.

Q. Any discussion between the two of you during the recent test series?

MATTHEW EBDEN: The cricket (smiling)? We keep it amicable. (Laughter.)

No, I'm quite happy to admit when the Aussies get thumped in India, but they came back and they do well.

We keep an eye on it, I guess.

ROHAN BOPANNA: Yeah, there was nothing much to really say. More than Matty, there's a few other Aussie guys who I really have a chat with, and especially I think Peersy, he keeps asking me, What's up with the pitch? What's your take on that?

I said, I'm as clueless as you are. I'm also reading it. A win is a win. You can't really blame the externals. You've just got to go and play the sport.

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