

# BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, March 10, 2024

## Alex de Minaur

Press Conference



A. de MINAUR/A. Bublik

7-5, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: Congrats. Great form today. How do you rate your performance?

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, happy to be in the round of 16. Happy to kind of keep the level I've had recently, and especially against a tricky opponent like Bublik.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. A really solid season thus far. Can you talk a bit about being more aggressive? Can you talk a little bit more about how it's a real leap of faith you had to take and there's probably some risk inherent, coming out of your comfort zone a bit, playing a different brand of tennis. How did you come with the idea you felt you needed to do that and how have you kind of progressed in that direction?**

ALEX de MINAUR: Well, I think it's been an aspect of my game that's gradually been improving over the years. Obviously over the years I've put on a little bit more muscle and naturally my weight of ball has been a little bit heavier, a little bit bigger.

I've always had these kind of tools and variety to my game that I didn't often bring onto the court a lot of the time. I felt like I was getting pushed to side to side or even bullied around the court way too often. It was more kind of, yeah, you could call it a leap of faith, or more of an aggressive mindset that if I want to be beating the best players in the world that this is my only chance. You know, I'm not going to beat them by doing the same stuff that I've been doing in the past.

So obviously something had to change, and that meant backing myself and playing, you know, I guess with less fear and more of the kind of aggressive mindset.

**Q. Alex, what caused the difference in the two sets? It was like night and day the way you played in that second set.**

ALEX de MINAUR: To be honest, it's never going to be a straightforward match against Bublik, because he will bring out a lot of different stuff on the court. You know, there will be patches where he's playing amazing stuff and then patches where he's giving you a couple free points here and there. You don't get any rhythm at all.

Look, in the first set I served for the set, and I played a pretty horrible game. I thought I did very good mentally to kind of hang in the moment, stay in there, stay positive, told myself I would get more chances. Just keep at it.

And obviously a good start to the second set was key. I felt like at that moment he probably felt like it was a little bit of an uphill battle, and I was able to stay solid and get the win in the end.

**Q. When you play somebody like Bublik and taking into consideration what you were saying, that it's awkward, do you see it as a challenge for yourself to get out of those sort of situations, or you just feel frustrated because he's so out there with the way he plays?**

ALEX de MINAUR: Oh, 100% these are the toughest matches to play, because you've got to be focused at all times. He's giving you nothing at times and then playing lights-out tennis.

Often, more often than not, the overall level of tennis drops significantly, just because there's no rhythm. So it is extremely tough mentally to stay in the moment and stay positive and kind of tell yourself to keep playing it point by point no matter what and don't let any of the results, the rallies, the awkwardness affect you.

So it is very tough. I'm happy how I dealt with it today.

**Q. This surface is a little different from other hard courts. I'm sort of curious how it affects you and your game.**

ALEX de MINAUR: Well, look, over the years it's traditionally been quite a gritty hard court where the ball

kind of checks up a little bit and it was quite slow. I think this year it's way quicker than previous years, and you're actually getting a lot of purchase out of your balls, especially if you hit a nice kind of flat, deeper shot. You feel like the ball is skidding and you're getting some help from the court.

So it's probably, for me at least personally, the best this court has felt for my type of game since I've played over here. So it's finally gotten a little bit quicker, and at least I'm one of the players who's enjoying it.

**Q. How does it feel on your feet? Movement is such an integral part of everybody's game, but especially your game. Can you slide on it at all? Does it grab on your feet the way it grabs on the ball?**

ALEX de MINAUR: Look, in previous years it was very gritty and it was a little bit harder to slide. Traditionally the speed of the courts, you know, if the courts are a little bit slicker and quicker, then it makes it a lot easier to slide. Right? The slower, the grittier of the court, it makes it a little bit tougher on the body and tougher to slide.

So previous years it was a lot harder to slide. This year it feels very good and very easy on your body.

**Q. We're getting to the end of the era of the Big 3. Have you played the Big 3? If so, can you give just a little bit of a comparison of them and, say, on a slow hard court who's the toughest? Just talk about facing those players.**

ALEX de MINAUR: Well, yeah, I have faced all of them. I faced Novak twice. I faced Rafa I think four times. I faced Roger just the once. If we're going on results, I played Roger once. Final Basel, and he taught me an absolute lesson out there. It was 2 and 2 and, you know, I felt quite helpless out there. I would have loved to have another crack at him, you know, maybe a couple years down the track but didn't get the chance or the opportunity.

But yeah, I think, you know, you can't go past Novak in these conditions. I mean, the way he adapts to almost every court is pretty astounding and how effective he is on all these different surfaces.

So he's definitely at the top of my list.

**Q. The win over Novak, does that trigger another level of self-belief for you? How does that win live with you as you progress through this season?**

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, the win was huge and a huge milestone for me. It kind of got things rolling in the right

direction. Right? For me this year has been huge from the very start. I've felt like I found another gear, and even breaking into the top 10 was a huge moment for me.

So from then on I've definitely been able to kind of believe in myself more, trust myself, trust what I'm doing. Yeah, basically then all the work that I'm putting in and the type of tennis that I'm playing in that mindset is definitely working for me.

**Q. A couple months on from the Djokovic win, when you look back a year and you have the Nadal win, compared to both of them now, would you say the Djokovic one was bigger because it got you into the top 10 or the Nadal one because it really established you?**

ALEX de MINAUR: I'm going to go with the Novak win. It's mainly based on the fact that I played him the year before in Australia. Again, he made me look silly on center court, like I was struggling to win games. Best-of-five match, and he, yeah, absolutely diced me up on my home slam, center court in front of all the Aussies. Yeah, it was devastating. It was borderline kind of embarrassing.

And to be able to kind of come back a year later, put all that behind me and break through that barrier, I think it's incredibly significant for me as a human being, as a player, and just to get that self-belief. Right?

I think I'm extremely proud of my efforts being able to turn, you know, that matchup around.

**Q. Do you ever celebrate after any of those sort of wins? I mean, we were obviously in the middle of United Cup in Perth when the Djokovic result happened, but do you give yourself the time to really pat yourself on the back on what you've achieved?**

ALEX de MINAUR: After my match against Zverev, which officially made me crack the top 10, that night I had a glass of wine with the team. That's basically my celebration. It was a great feeling. I had another one after Rotterdam, getting a new career high.

It's not often, but, you know, a couple milestones here and there that definitely mean a lot. I think it's very important to celebrate them and give them all the time it's worth, because you lose a lot of tennis matches, you go through a lot of lows, so you need to celebrate the highs, as well.

**Q. Can you compare this little -- I don't know if "breakthrough" is the right word, but it sounds like it is, you're thinking of it that way, getting into the top 10 -- with other sort of milestones that you hit previously**

**and what it feels like and what you have figured out to get through to this one compared to what made you make that breakthrough in the past at those other milestones?**

ALEX de MINAUR: I think tennis, if you're looking strictly at rankings, you know, your first milestone is definitely to crack the top 100. That's the first one.

And then you're probably looking realistically top 50. Right? That's another big one. Then you're looking at top 32. Right? You want to be seeded at slams. Then all of a sudden you're looking at kind of top 16, because you want to be part of those better seeds at slams and try to be protected.

And then it's obviously top 10. I think top 10 is one of those things as a kid that you dream of. Right? When you're a kid, you think anything is possible. Right? There's no lack of belief when you're quite young, because you don't really understand how difficult it is.

But as years go by, as you enter the tour, you're in the juniors, you're playing the seniors, and you start to realize, jeez, this isn't as easy as I once thought. And at times you question if you're really going to make it. Right? Because there's so many unbelievable players out there.

So to be able to break through all those barriers and get that belief in myself that I am indeed good enough to be a top-10 player, you know, beating the best players in the world and doing this week in and week out, it was, you know, one of those moments that, yeah, you dream of as a kid. It's probably one of the most important ones.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports