

BNP Paribas Open

Monday, March 11, 2024

Gael Monfils

Press Conference



G. MONFILS/C. Norrie

6-7, 7-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. A great match.

GAEL MONFILS: Thank you.

Q. I'd like to ask a general question about something beautiful that you wrote recently where you said it's tempting to take the middle ground, to never take a stance. But taking a stance, coming out, having courage, gives you integrity, a sense of power. Could you talk about where that courage comes from to take stances?

GAEL MONFILS: Oh, definitely from my parents. I have been raised like that. They always, you know, teach me to believe. You know, it's more to believe what I'm doing, try to educate myself on many stuff and ask my own opinions on many stuff.

Then, yeah, if I don't know, just be honest and say I don't know. If you really feel it's right, just say it.

I guess, yeah, this come from my parents.

Q. You have had so many problems with your body the last couple of years, and even in tournaments where you would play a great match and a hard match like this where it would take a lot out of you, the challenge was coming back for the next one. Even you would say, I don't know if I'm going to be able to walk tomorrow. How are you feeling now? Is your body in a place where you can play a tough match one day and then another tough match the next day?

GAEL MONFILS: You know, the great stuff is I'm not playing tomorrow (smiling). That's good.

But I feel better and better, to be honest. I've been playing weeks after weeks, which has been a long time I am able to do that. It's tough to say yes, no, because we never

know. You know, I cannot assure, but the thing is I feel good. So far, you know, the body is holding, so I'm happy with that.

Q. How did you turn that match around? It's a long day for you, because I'm sure you're going to be back tonight for Elina's match. So recovering from all of this.

GAEL MONFILS: Believe. You know, I believe that I could be better. Cam was playing a little bit different. Different variety of his game, different trajectory than usual.

Then I had to just to believe that me, too, I could change, I could do some different adjustment, maybe play some area that I don't like really and believe that I can do it. Be gutsy sometime, I guess, with the underarm serve, try to be creative, you know.

Sometime for me it's important, because if I stay too much steady, let's say, like, for a lot of people, I think I hurt myself a little bit, because I will get really defensive, and with the creativity I can allow myself to try more stuff. Yeah, to believe I can still create. And then of course you need to be a bit lucky, and I guess everything works for me today.

Q. Would you say that you have extra motivation or inspiration being that you're trying to qualify for the Olympics? Can you talk a little bit about how important it would be for you to play in Paris.

GAEL MONFILS: My first motivation is to be back where I have to be back. You know, I always say it's tough, but before I hurt myself, I was 15 in the world. I was playing so much. I was actually playing great here, beat the World No. 1, and discover the new legend, Carlos Alcaraz, played a tough match against him by playing great tennis, quarters in slams, lost in five-setters, won a tournament. Good year. Felt almost I could be back on the top 10.

Then bad stuff happen, and then I haven't played for a year, and then a year later, you know, everybody, okay, you get age, think you're done. But I still believe I can play.

Of course I set goals, and the goal is of course the Olympics. That's long-time goal. But short time is to play good, win matches, and try to get back in a good position. I made quarters in Toronto. Played a good three-setter with Jannik. You know, tried to play good in big tournaments. That's, you know, that's all the goals that I have.

Then of course if I can make to the Olympics, it would be great, be great.

Q. In 2021 perhaps Japan's greatest athlete, Naomi Osaka, lit the torch. I think you're one of France's greatest athletes in recent years. How about you lighting the torch?

GAEL MONFILS: No, I think in France we have bigger names, legend of the sport. I think I'm a good guy, good athlete from France, but I'm definitely not a legend of, you know, our beautiful country.

I think I have to win Roland Garros if one day, you know, that will be a privilege, but, you know, I think I'm really far from that.

Q. Elina has said that having the baby has made her a better player because she has different perspective on things. Have you had the same experience?

GAEL MONFILS: I think no matter what, it makes you a better person, you know. It's definitely the best thing happen to me, and I guess for her too. And then of course when you're a better person you can be a better player, you can see difference definitely for her. It helps her on many stuff, and I think she will open herself maybe to you, but for me it just give me even more happiness in my life.

Q. You just spoke about the joy of creativity. Who have been the most creative players you've seen or played against? Just talk about, whether it's Kyrgios, Santoro, Roger, just talk about the beauty of creativity.

GAEL MONFILS: I feel those two players that you mentioned, they have been very creative, you know. Everybody has his own way to create. If I go with Roger first, you know, the way that he was positioning himself on the court, the way some shot he will go for, the tactic that he will use, this was magical, to be honest, what he could create, generate with angles, with sharpness, with time of -- I mean, he was like keeping time and he was getting really close off the baseline and playing half volleys, that was the beauty.

And Nick, the way his vibe in the court, the way he's serving, creating -- yourself, when you play Nick, you

know, you always a little bit in the back foot, because he is so good, he's create so much so you don't know what to expect. So it's quite -- I mean, I love that, because it's quite tough to read, tough to understand where he goes, powerful shots, he can create pace from anywhere, you know, from the court.

His ability also to read the game, Nick, I think people, they don't understand. The guy is reading the game, he's one of the best reader of the game. He's reading the game crazy.

So this is one of his best traits to Nick.

Q. Fabrice?

GAEL MONFILS: Magician, Fabrice, we call him like that. Like, always playing with the perfect tactical, love the geometry of the courts, change the spin, playing lot of spin. That was amazing. I could play against him to see, like, the change of tempo.

But how much the guy could make you uncomfortable with different spin, different variety of shots. It was just, like, amazing. Best lobber. His lob was insane.

Q. What's it like to have a friendship with the young player like Arthur Fils? What do you think of his future in the sport?

GAEL MONFILS: You know, it's amazing that I could say that I play with those guy. Again, it's a new generation. So actually grew up with my sister at Roland Garros. For me it's a privilege to play with him, to be honest. He's quite young, he has a bright future.

I think he's really talented guy. Needs definitely, you know, matches and matches to get experience, but I feel like he almost doesn't need experience on some shots or some way would handle his match.

He already won a 250, so the kid is ready. You know, the kid is ready to shine. He needs just to have his time, and, you know, his time can be here. It can be anywhere. When you're talented like him, it can be every week. He has a really bright future in front of him.

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