

# BNP Paribas Open

Monday, March 11, 2024

## Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



L. NARDI/N. Djokovic

6-4, 3-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Tough night, Novak. These kids are good. Did he surprise you with the level that he played? How much did you even know about him beforehand?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Congrats to him for particularly in the third set playing some great, great tennis.

I watched him play. I didn't know much about him, but I watched him play, and I knew he possesses great quality tennis from the baseline, especially the forehand side. Moves well. Very talented.

He got in as a Lucky Loser to main draw, so he really didn't have anything to lose, so he played great. Deserved to win. I was more surprised with my level. My level was really, really bad.

That's it, you know. These two things come together. He's having a great day; I'm having a really bad day. Results as a negative outcome for me.

**Q. Do you think the fact that you didn't play as well as you normally play was because you haven't played since the Australian Open or was it also because you haven't played here for a while and these conditions...**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It could be both, to be honest. I'm not so sure. I'm going to obviously analyze what was done, what could have been done better, and then move on.

I do play fewer tournaments, so I'm more selective with my schedule. So of course it's not great feeling when you, you know, drop out very early in the tournament, and especially here, I haven't played five years. I really wanted to do well. But wasn't meant to be. We move on.

**Q. So do you have an idea of your schedule going forward right now? Do you think you're going to be in**

**Miami?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, for the moment, Miami is there, so let's see. Let's see, obviously 10 minutes ago I was on the court, so I'm still hot-headed a bit. I need to take a day or two and then see what I want to do next.

**Q. Novak, as that match progressed, obviously he was playing some outstanding tennis, but did you have a feeling that maybe he was just also going to come off the boil?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, if I didn't make him, but I really didn't make him. I helped him play well, and I didn't help myself at all.

I made some really terrible unforced errors. Just quite defensive tennis, and, you know, not much on the ball in the third, and that's it. You know, he just stepped in and he used the time that he had. He was playing more free and more aggressive than I did, and going for his shots and that break on 3-2 in the third was enough.

Just a bit of windy conditions today. Completely contrary to what I was having in my training sessions these days, and the first match, but still, it's not an excuse. I should have done much better.

But again, credit to him for pulling it off.

**Q. Last couple years you mainly are playing in the run-up to a Grand Slam. I feel this is the first time in a while you've just been playing on the tour.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah. I mean, not really.

**Q. But you know what I mean.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I haven't played five, six weeks, you know. So I can't really say I'm part of the tour, really, as all the other guys, because...

**Q. What I'm saying is there is not...**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I understand. I haven't played here

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five years or Miami. I get your point.

**Q. Is it different mentally coming in if you're not, like, pointing towards...**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I wasn't enjoying not playing the Sunshine Double last couple of years. I really wanted to play.

Yeah, it's different, but again, it's not like I made a mistake for coming here. You know, I really wanted to come and I really enjoy being both Indian Wells and Miami.

**Q. Do you feel there was anything you could do in retrospect to change the result? We're so used to you being in full form and having titles this far in the season. Any thoughts about this season?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I could have done everything different. I mean, as I said, very poor performance from my side.

Yeah, no titles this year. That's not something I'm used to. I was starting the season most of my career with a Grand Slam win or, you know, Dubai win, or any or tournament.

It's fine. You know, it's part of the sport. You just have to accept it. Some you win; some you lose. Hopefully I'll win some more and still keep going.

I guess every trophy that eventually comes my way is going to be great (smiling), obviously to break the kind of negative cycle a little bit I'm having in the last three, four tournaments where I haven't really been close to my best.

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