

BNP Paribas Open

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Jiri Lehecka

Press Conference



J. LEHECKA/S. Tsitsipas

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Jiri. Well done again today. Can you tell us what is working so well for you here?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, so obviously, I mean, these playing conditions are fitting me quite well. I didn't have the same feeling last year. That's one of the reasons why I came here with Tomas this year, you know, to help me a bit more with his experience, what was he feeling when he was playing here, what kind of tips he has to put me through some difficult situations on the court.

It works well. It was a good decision, and I feel like I got some kind of confidence here on this surface again, and I feel good.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You mentioned Tomas. We know him very well as a player but maybe not so much as a coach. Can you talk to us a little bit about what it's like to work with him and what are his strong points from your perspective?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, I mean, Tomas is, in many aspects, he's the same as he was as a player. I mean, he's very professional. He's very dedicated to the success.

Of course for him he's doing everything what he wanted his team to do when he was the player. This is something he expects from himself right now. So he knows what player wants, he knows what player feels, and that's something when he's trying to step in and to help me with some particular things.

And also on the court he's very free. You know, he's not taking things too seriously. He knows the important moment is during the match on the court. Not off the court.

There can be, of course, there must be some, like, big professionalism, of course, even outside of the court, but still we are focusing mostly on doing the right things during

the match and during the practice. Yeah.

Q. What tips did Tomas give you as it related to playing in Indian Wells?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, so all the tips he gave me were, like, connected with working more with my legs, working more forward and backwards, you know, during the points.

So we worked on this, and we spoke about these things mostly in the beginning of the week, in the beginning of the tournament when we had some time to prepare ourselves. We had some time to practice more, to spend more time on the court.

Yeah, that's a moment where he was stepping in and telling me, yeah, yeah, I know, he told me how the conditions are when it's dark, when it's night, how the conditions are when it's sunny, for example, today first round.

Yeah, then of course we are speaking about the opponents. So yeah, we worked quite a lot during past few days, and then before these matches we just focused on getting into the zone and feeling well on court.

Q. It's been very big what you have done in terms of milestones, as we say. You hadn't had a top-10 win in a while. You beat Andrey who beat you last year here. Stefanos, No. 11. Also getting to this stage in a Masters, a quarterfinals. Talk to me about accomplishing these things.

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, it wasn't tough for me last year to play all these tournaments for the first time, because all the Masters 1000s events are, I would say, very special in some way.

So for me to come here, for example, last year it was, like, a dream, you know, it was my first time playing Indian Wells, first time seeing these amazing stages, you know, amazing fans. So I was a bit like, it was, for me, like a small fairy tale, I would say, being here. I was very happy that I made it to my first Masters last year.

But we felt in the end of last season that the results on these big tournaments were not what we wanted, and that I had some chances to go further in the tournaments, to play better, and to beat some players, but I did not accomplish that.

So we were searching for the mistakes we've done, or I have done, and we focused on removing these things. It was of course much more easier for me to come back here for the second time when I knew what is where, you know, how does it look like, how do I feel.

And I also knew what is waiting for me here, you know. So that was very important thing for me to help to prepare to play here again in Indian Wells.

Q. Do you feel you're at the point of your career where experience is now helping you, making you a better player, or do you still feel relatively inexperienced on the tour?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, in some moments, I feel that, yeah, I've been through this already, I know how I felt last time. So, you know, sometimes I feel like I've been through this moment already, so I know how to react now. But there is still many, there are still many moments where I'm, like, yeah, what is this, how do I feel, you know, what should I do, how should I react, what kind of shots should I make or what I should not do.

And that's one of the reasons why having Tomas here with me is very good, because he has much more experience than I have, and with his willingness to share it, it's just great for me to have him here by my side and to have some support even from these kind of guys like him who've been through this all many times, and who knows how it works.

Q. How long have you known Tomas? When did you first work with him or connect with him?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, unfortunately I never met Tomas on tour, because his last year was 2019, and I got professional -- I mean, I won my first challenger 2021, so there was, like, small gap between us.

But the good thing is that he knows my coach, Michal Navratil, very well. They have been together, you know, they know each other since they were kids, you know, they were traveling together in early stage of his career, you know. They were best friends on tour for some time. Of course, their paths has changed.

But that was one of the reasons why we got in touch. After my good run at the Australian Open last year when I was in

the quarterfinals, Tomas texted to Michal, and said, like, just like that I played well, that he liked the way how I played, and then they just stayed in touch.

He was in Dubai last year where we met, and just we spoke a lot. I just asked him if he would like to travel with me for a few tournaments to help me and to get back on the track from this different position, and he liked that idea. So we agreed.

Our first tournament together was last year in Monte-Carlo, so this is our second year together, and we are very -- I think that we are both happy with the way how it goes, and together, I have a good team around me, also with my fitness coach here, Michal who is at home. So we are, all of us, we are trying to cooperate together. We speak together about everything, and to make the best possible outcome out of this.

Q. There are so many aspects of being a somewhat young ATP player traveling the world, competing, growing, on court and off. What gives you the most satisfaction in your career and playing, being a pro?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, I mean, it's not easy, you know, to get used to this life. I think that I'm in the position when I don't really feel it that much as some, for example, older other players. But I'm still in the position where I'm a bit looking for myself, you know. I'm still looking for what to do when I'm not playing, you know, how to fill these weeks in between tournaments, you know.

So it's not easy, but for me the best thing is when I win the match, I mean, that's something I'm most happy about, and that these moments are something that keeps me in a good mood, in a good shape for a long, long time. So every time I have a chance to go to the net, shake the opponent's hand and with the feeling that I won, that's something that satisfies me the most right now. That's something I'm very happy about.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports