

# BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 7, 2026

## Jack Draper

Press Conference



J. DRAPER/R. Bautista Agut

3-6, 6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Congrats, Jack. Tough conditions out there, but how did you manage to come back in three sets?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, Bautista is a really tough opponent. I think it was difficult conditions, quite swirly. I didn't quite get my rhythm in there in the first set but then definitely settled down and had a bit more of a spark about me in the second and third and was happy with the way I came through and competed hard against a tough opponent.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. In the third set, there were a couple of balls that were very close to the line. You may not have agreed with the call, and then there were some loose errors, but you recentered, you dialed up your focus again. Having been off the tour for so long, how is it to get those best practices back for focus and tight spots like that?**

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, it's difficult. I think the one thing that maybe is taking a little bit of time is the consistency in what I'm dealing with, especially on the match court. Obviously practice is different. I feel like I have been practicing pretty well for a long time.

Obviously haven't been able to maybe prepare exactly the way I've wanted to because of my injury, and coming back onto the tour I have had to be deliberate and quite slow with what I'm doing.

And then it's difficult, because getting out here, you're getting thrown straight into the, back into the deep end with top players like Bautista and all the guys here. So you have to quickly adapt to their play, and you have to remain focused all the time all throughout the matches. Otherwise you can have ups and downs.

So I think the more matches I get like today where I'm able

to come through some difficult moments and play better for it, I think it will help me. That's just the process I'm going through right now.

**Q. Obviously dropping sets is an occupational hazard as a tennis player. With the lack of matches you have had, is there any sort of hint of panic, thinking, oh, God, this is not going well, as you started? And second point, how is your knee? I saw it's taped. What's up with your knee?**

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, firstly, yeah, I think the more time I actually spend on court, the better. I don't want to be obviously playing three-set matches, but I think, for instance, today is first Masters 1000 back up. Been off the tour for eight months, and so it's been difficult getting back into it.

So I think today helped me actually playing three sets and being able to stay out there a bit longer and work things out and be in those tough situations mentally, because saving breakpoints and having adversity against you in matches, you can't really replicate how you feel when you're in that situation in practice and these types of things.

I didn't feel like I panicked too much. I just knew that I had to step up my game, otherwise I was going to lose, because everyone is a top player here. They take advantage of that.

Yeah, as for knee, my knee is good. Obviously when you have an injury for a long time and you're not able to play 100% on court, this sport is very physical, it's very demanding on your body, and so you pick up lots of other little niggles. It's not like you're just off the court resting. You have to get yourself back up to 100% and fully moving.

Competitive tennis now, that's the way it is. You're using would your body so much. My knee is fine.

**Q. You seem to have a sort of your own unique style. How much do you work with Vuori to match that? How much do you work on that?**

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, a lot. Vuori have been an amazing brand to work with so far. Very blessed to be with them, because their interest in how they can make the material not only really good for performance but also the style of it, as well.

Maybe when I was younger, the sleeveless thing didn't quite work out because of the fact that I didn't have any muscles (smiling), but now it seems to work all right.

No, I think it's more the material when I'm wearing it on court. It's amazing. I don't feel like I overheat. I used to overheat quite a lot in the past and obviously sweat a lot, as well.

I think, to be honest, we're in an individual sport, and tennis is, I think, becoming more and more fashionable. It's cool to work with a brand that has such a big vision for themselves. Not only on-court stuff but also off-court. Really comfortable brand.

**Q. How different did this feel compared to your first tournament back? Does it feel like you're making the kind of steps where you want to be feeling more comfortable on the court, that kind of thing?**

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, definitely. The volley was difficult because the courts were rapid, unbelievably fast, so couldn't really get much rallies in, especially with the guys I played against last week.

To come here, it's been better for practicing, and of course there is a lot more rallies, especially with a player like Bautista, almost difficult because the balls are so soft and so heavy that it's tough to hit winners.

So I'm definitely getting more reps in on my groundstrokes. And I think definitely in the second and third sets today, playing more the way I want to be able to play and the way I need to play to be successful as the year goes on and as the tournament goes on. I feel like I'm improving.

**Q. When you're coming back after a while out, which have you found more difficult: To get physically in the right place or to get the right mindset to be competitive at the top level again?**

JACK DRAPER: I mean, I haven't started with the mindset to get competitive. It's more in the matches, how not being as up and down to maintain the focus throughout the match.

There is definitely a few times where my level was just dipped a little bit, and you can't have that, especially against better and better players, because they take

advantage of those moments. I think the more matches I play, that will all clear up.

And then physically, yeah, I mean, I want to spend a lot of time on court. I want to be out there competing more and more, but obviously I am very still fresh to coming back from my injury, and I have to be sensible and know that I have a long career ahead of me.

I'm still a bit of time away from where I want to be physically, because I have to make up for lost time on the practice court and on the match court, but I'm trending in the right direction. So week by week, day by day, things are getting better for me.

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