

# BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 7, 2026

## Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/K. Majchrzak

4-6, 6-1, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Novak, well done. How happy were you for your first match on the tour after Australian Open?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, it's good to be back on tour. Five weeks with no official match, I knew that the first match in such a long time will be a little bit tricky, you know, challenging, obviously, with conditions that are quite challenging, as well.

But, you know, I managed to reset after I lost that first set right away in the second and really never looked back. I felt like I had to find my A game when it was most needed, particularly the beginning of the third, which was the case. So I'm glad to be able to close it out the way I did.

Of course, you can always, you know, look at things in a positive or negative way. There are things to work on. Yeah, I just like the way I fought and hung in there. So looking forward to the next one.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

### **Q. How high on your list of priorities is the LA Olympics and defending your title from Paris?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, it would be nice. That's one of the long-term goals, let's call it, a way to reach the Olympics. That would be nice. I mentioned it a couple of times in the last year or so.

You know, it's still a long way. I think at my age and my stage of my career, every year seems like, you know, longer period than for anyone else who is younger. But I'll try to make it, definitely one of the motivations, so try to be there.

**Q. I remember a couple of years ago you were talking post-Goran about considering maybe not having a coach. I just wondered if that's something you would ever do. And also, what does a 24-time Grand Slam champion look for in a coach?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, Boris was with me. He's been an assistant coach and analyst. You know, he's obviously filling in the role of the tennis coach, but I don't have anyone who I can call my primary tennis coach at the moment.

And I'm okay with that. You know, I feel I have what I need. I don't think that right now I'm ready to, again, at this stage of my career, to bring somebody completely new and go through the same process of getting to know each other, which doesn't mean that I'm not trying to, how can I say, improve my game or innovate and look for the ways to get better on and off the court.

I'm doing that. In the offseason I, you know, brought different people in, and spent some weeks of analyzing and kind of deconstructing, reconstructing my game in a sense, as much time I had available in my hand.

I think it paid off. I had a great tournament in Australia, beating Sinner in a late-night five-setter and then taking Carlos to a tight four sets. It took me couple of years to win against either of those guys. I mean, years, I beat Carlos in '25 Australian Open, but I haven't had many victories against him in Grand Slams in last couple of years.

Yeah, it was a great way to kind of see that I can still beat them, and I can still do this, you know, at the highest level. That was great.

### **Q. I asked Carlos the other day where he was with the 41 matches in a row you won at the start of the 2011 season.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: That was your question? I saw his answer.

**Q. So I don't need to repeat. For the benefit of everyone else, he said having won 12 or now 13 in a row, which he thinks is pretty special, he's realized how far away 41 is. I just wonder if you could remember what it felt like to be on a run like that?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: He can do it. He has everything that you need to have in terms of the game, in terms of the adaptability to different surfaces, and level of fitness and recovery that he has shown and matured over the years.

He needs to keep his body healthy. If he keeps his body healthy, I mean, he's so good that he can win any tournament he plays on.

So you never know. He's been doing some historic things in our sport for such a young age. But yeah, I mean, winning 40-plus matches, and I have had a couple other runs, as well, at the beginning of different seasons where I had 25-plus, I think, twice, it's demanding.

But, you know, at the same time, it feels when you are winning so much and you're riding that wave, you know, you don't want to let go of that wave. You want to surf on that wave as long as you can, because the level of confidence is really high, and obviously when you lose first time, that is a bit shaken up.

But as long as you're winning, you feel like each match you feel stronger, in a sense, if I can reflect or recall my feelings that I had during that time.

Yeah, I wish him many more victories. I think he's great for our sport, and what he's been doing is remarkable.

**Q. Gael Monfils is quitting the tour at the end of the year. You are quite the same generation, same age. You start your career at the same time. What do you remember from him, and what about your terrific record against him?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: One of the rare guys that is older than me on the tour (smiling), with Wawrinka and Gael. I mean, these guys, we're talking about Gael now, he deserves every applause and every credit out there for not just what he has done on the tennis court and with his athleticism that was off the charts, I mean, one of the most athletic tennis players ever to hold the racquet, in my opinion, and one of the most exciting players to watch.

I always love, I mean, I think there is no one who doesn't like watching Gael play tennis because you never know what to expect. I think that's what brought a lot of interest and also a lot of smiles to people when they watch him play.

But also, his character features and values. You know, he's such a nice guy, and it's, like, literally no one that I know in the last 20 years that has gotten into something negative or some kind of conflict with him.

That speaks volumes, you know, about him, who he is as a person, and always had tremendous respect by all of the fellow tennis players. You know, everyone loves him. He, you know, deserves to play this year the way he wants to play and to go out from tennis and say good-bye in a way that he feels that it's fit.

I hope the crowd will give him in every tournament a proper support that he deserves.

**Q. In January, Craig Tiley suggested that maybe women should play best-of-five-set tennis matches. I was just wondering, as someone who has played so, so many five-setters...**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I don't recommend (smiling).

**Q. Can you explain the challenges, not only physically, but the mental challenge of taking on the five-set? And how long it took you to feel confident and comfortable in that?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It feels like when you're preparing for a Grand Slam, you play best-of-five for us, it feels like you're preparing for something completely different, completely different tour, different physical preparation and mental preparation.

Because some matches can go, you know, three, four, five, six hours. And I have played, you know, longest Grand Slam final in the history. I was part of that with Nadal in 2012, went almost six hours in Australia.

So just grueling. I mean, incredibly grueling and demanding, and I played recently with Jannik, I don't know what it was, almost, whatever it was, four-and-a-half, almost five hours in Australia.

I mean, back in 2012, my body has recovered much faster than what is the case today after such a marathon, long matches. Yes, you do have a day between matches in Grand Slams, but when you have a match like that, that is, you know, four-, five-plus hours, it's just taking a big toll on your physical condition. Very hard to recover and be able to, I guess, be ready for the next challenge.

You might play well the next match, but then the longer you progress in the tournament, the physically more exhausted you are. That's the big one. Obviously mentally, as well, of course. But physically, it's a whole different animal, so to say, that you're facing in Grand Slams compared to anything else that we have on the tour.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports