

Next Gen ATP Finals

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Milano, Italia

Jiri Lehecka

Press Conference

J. LEHECKA/D. Stricker

4-1, 4-3, 2-4, 4-1

Q. Great match. For ranking and for the play you show was for sure not a surprise. In which sense was a surprise for you? Maybe the score? Maybe you were expecting something more by him or by his serve? And which was the key, the return or what?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, it wasn't an easy match. I mean, we all saw what he was capable of doing this week. He was playing incredible during every match he played so far.

So for me I knew that even if he's like not right now in top 100 that of course it wouldn't be easy.

I played him before this year. I knew that he can serve pretty well, he can play great shots with his forehand. So me and my team set up a tactic to try to play aggressive, to go for every volley as much as I can. Today I was just a better player, you know. But I'm very happy with my performance today, yeah.

Q. Czech tennis has a great, great tradition. I would like to know what inspired you more when you were a kid? And who do you think your game looks like closer let's say to some Czech players who we can mention. Either Berdych or whoever?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah. So, for sure, I mean when I was a kid I was looking up to Tomas Berdych for sure because Davis Cup 2012 and 2013 when Czech team won both times it was an incredible experience for me to see it with my own eyes. You know, how they played, how they won in front of 20,000 Czech fans.

So then of course doing my career and when I was growing up as a kid I saw some similarities in our game. That he has a strong body as I have. He can play really fast. We have similar technique of forehand. He can serve pretty well as well.

So then of course when we speak about Czech players,



Tomas Berdych is for sure the one who I think that I'm trying to get as close as I can, yeah.

Q. In general which player who you are looking for? I mean Djokovic or whatever?

JIRI LEHECKA: I mean, this is tough question because when we take the top-3 guys during the last few years everyone has something more. You know, if it's Djokovic's flexibility or Roger's touch or Rafa's warrior mentality, it's every time something very rare.

So of course my goal is to take everything I can at least a bit from all of these guys. Then my biggest goal is to create my own game, my own display, what I can show on the court. To make myself more me at the moment with some moments I took from these guys.

Q. When you started to play tennis why did you decide to play tennis? Was that because of the Davis Cup you saw or other reason? Because your parents are athletes, aren't they? But they're not tennis players.

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, I mean our house is like 100 meters away from tennis courts. So for me my grandfather took me to the tennis courts with my mother for the first time.

I was playing with my older sister who played at the time as well. So for me as a younger brother, younger sibling it wasn't that tough deciding what to do. I just wanted to do what my older sister did.

But I was just like, when I was a kid I was doing almost everything. I was running, I was doing all sports my parents taught me.

So probably when I was watching these moments of victory for Czech team that was a moment when I say, Yeah, I can play this sport as well. Not on their level for now. But I like how they played, how they won, so I will try to keep it going.

Q. Can you tell us one secret about yourself? I mean you like chess or go fishing or go running or go hiking?



JIRI LEHECKA: I mean, I like hiking a lot. It's just something where I can clear my mind. Where I just see a beautiful nature.

And then of course spending time with my friends. You know, because of my schedule we don't see each other much. So, yeah, these two things are something I like the most.

Of course, family, girlfriend, everybody, you know, these are like the people who deserves my attention when we are not speaking about tennis the most.

So I think, as for them, I'm just trying to give them back a little bit. So, yeah, spending time with my loved ones.

Q. Who is more popular, Petra Kvitova or Martina Navratilova before or Ivan Lendl? If we're talking in Czech Republic, who are the most recognized tennis players? And second question, with tennis as a sport it's No. 2, 3, 4, 5? More or less?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, so when we speak about Czech tennis players I think that Petra Kvitova is one of the most famous ones. Because she won Wimbledon twice. This is something like very huge in my opinion. She won it twice. That's the most famous tournament on the planet.

So for me I think that she is still the one people know the most. But for me it's tough to say because I am very young for this to say. Maybe with the older generation there would still be Ivan Lendl in their minds. This I'm not sure about.

When we speak about the sports I think that tennis is like No. 3 or maybe 2. I think soccer is the No. 1 for sure. And then it's like ice hockey with tennis together. But I think that tennis can be a little bit more popular than ice hockey.

Q. Do you like this tennis indoors or fast this condition? Or maybe you prefer to play a little slower and to think more about more technique and more slowing down?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, it depends on many things. It's not only about surface, it's about the conditions. It's about even the balls, you know, the altitude. Everything is having some impact on my game.

So then of course when there are perfect conditions, which I like the most, then I can play almost every match with a similar consistency. And then of course here I like it a lot. Because they are very good balls. I like the way how it's easy to control them. The surface is not like crazy fast, but it's not slow. So when I the hit a good serve or a good

forehand it can really be considered as a weapon.

So, yeah, I think that it depends on many things. But here it's a very good and I like when it's a little bit faster, for sure.

Q. How long have you been with Navratil? And who were your former coach you had before? If you started when you were five years old was it your father or somebody else?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, with Michal I'm here, it will be four years, I think. Yeah. So he already knows me since I was a little kid. So I can say that we both are like growing up together through my tennis career and through all these moments.

And, yeah, before I was coached by Duchan Hart (Phonetic). It was in the close city to my home. I was starting to play with him when I was 10 years old.

And even before, like my first steps on court, they were with my grandfather and Jallo Saffray (phonetic). It's one guy who was taking care of me when I was really a little kid around six years old. But mostly my grandfather, with my mother, they took care of me when I was trying to play my first tennis balls into the court, yeah.

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