

Next Gen ATP Finals

Sunday, 13 November 2022

Milano, Italia

Jiri Lehecka

Press Conference

B. NAKASHIMA/J. Lehecka

4-3, 4-3, 4-2

Q. Tough match in the final. But you still must be happy for the tournament. How do you explain the fact that all matches were very balanced, including yours. Because before the beginning of the third you had 46 points each. But he has won against you two times, three sets. How do you explain it?

JIRI LEHECKA: Well, for sure it was a tough match. We were both playing great tennis this week. So it wasn't easy to get him under pressure. His game style is very good for this surface and these conditions. So, yeah, he deserves the win. He was playing the best tennis out of everybody over here.

So, yeah, I'm sad that I didn't take at least one set today. Because for sure, I mean, I was a break up in the first. I had two set points in the second in the tiebreak. This feels kind of unlucky.

But, yeah, he was more patient in the moment. He didn't do the mistake I did. So, yeah, he was more solid in the crucial moments. That's how I would explain today's loss.

Q. Unlucky today, but what positives can you take away from this week? Because you played really well.

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, I think that coming in this has been a great end to the season. After some tough losses in the past few weeks, you know, after US Open I wasn't feeling very comfortable on court. I didn't feel like it was going the right way.

So this for sure has been like a great impact to my game and to see what I need to work on again. To improve stuff we need to improve to get to the highest level and compete against the best guys.

In the past few weeks I show that I have the game to beat top guys. That I have the tennis I need for playing very good tennis.



This is an incredible event. I enjoyed this week fully. I'm very happy that ATP organized something like this. Because, I mean, it's like a nice gift for players to be able to compete in this event.

So, yeah, for me it was the best end of the season that I could wish for. Unfortunately, didn't get a win today, but if somebody told me before this season that I would be in the final, I would take it, for sure.

Q. A lot of guys or all the guys here had success on the Challenger Tour. Can you talk a little bit about how important that has been for you up to this point?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, for sure. Playing the tour it's like a necessary thing I think for young players to go through. You don't see many players to go directly to the ATP Tour. It's almost impossible.

So for sure all the guys competing here on this event, every one of them has been playing incredible Challenger Tour, you know. I won my first Challenger last year. Then I added one more. This year I won on home soil.

So for me the Challenger Tour is part of, was part of this year as well. Yeah, now I will focus for sure to keep in top 100 and to stay there and to move on and forward to make that transition from Challenger Tour level to ATP Tour level to top-50 level even faster.

Q. What do you think about Brandon Nakashima? What is his best stroke or quality? Because he's very solid. He won 16 tiebreakers out of the last 17 after Wimbledon. But if you had to describe him, what is his best?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, Brandon is an incredible player. He's very experienced for his age. This is something that is very rare at his age.

So, as you said, I mean the tiebreak is very solid. Every time he's not missing points. He's playing how he should play.

Then, of course, I think with my game is fitting him pretty well. I knew after our first meeting here that I need to



change something. That I need to change something a little bit different. Because, for sure, the way he played here was not the best for my game style.

So I changed something. It's going the right way. Unfortunately in the crucial moments in the end of both sets he was more solid. Maybe I wanted it more than I should. I would say, yeah, mostly in the second tiebreak there.

But, yeah, he's a great player. He deserved to win here. He was the best, the most solid. So all the best to him.

Q. One stroke that impressed you in the match?

JIRI LEHECKA: His serve is pretty huge. He's a tall guy. He's very strong. So he can serve everywhere, you know. His backhand is like crazy solid. He can play very fast. He can play everywhere from every position.

So, yeah, when a guy has a backhand like this, then of course when he gets you under the pressure with his forehand it's not very comfortable to go again to his forehand. So, yeah, serve and backhand are his biggest strokes, for sure.

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