

Rolex Shanghai Masters

Friday, 13 October 2023

Shanghai, China

Grigor Dimitrov

Press Conference



G. DIMITROV/N. Jarry

7-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Congrats, Grigor, through to another Masters 1000 semifinal. What was in the key in the match against Nico today?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: To receiving the serve. I think that was the key. I mean, he's been one of the, I think, for one of the most difficult guys to read the serve. I think today was no different.

Also, in moments like today, I had to stay very calm and collected throughout the whole match. I used every opportunity I had. He's a very tricky player as well, you don't get many rallies. Yeah, you need to kind of fight through a little bit more to create those opportunities. I was able to be very solid and make things happen for me today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Congratulations, Grigor. Only three unforced errors and no break points that you faced. Is that one of the cleanest matches you've played for awhile?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: That's cool, I didn't know (smiling). That's very nice. I would say that's what I think a decent match should look like, especially when you get to that type of level and that type of stages in a tournament. It can only get, as I said, it can only get tougher and tougher.

Again, I'm playing today, I played against a player that, as I said, is extremely tricky, and doesn't give me also much rhythm overall. So, in the same time, I really had to stay on top of those moments, because, if not, I didn't know if I'm going to be able to get an opportunity.

I think I had a few opportunities early on in the match, he neutralized them amazingly with first serves. Played a very solid tiebreak. Had opportunities in the first game in the second set. So, all in all, there were very few things that I could have done better. But, you know, after that break in the second set it really, like, helped me get myself in a

better position to not to be on the back foot, so to speak, so I can push through a little bit more.

Yeah, I mean, less unforced errors, and very straightforward in important moments was, I think, probably one of the keys.

Q. For the second match in a row you turned the tables on an opponent who has beaten you in recent matches. How good does that feel?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: I mean, for myself, it's what I want. I think it is how I want to, I want to put myself in those positions to play against all these players that are not only difficult to play, but players that I haven't beaten. I think, slowly but surely, I'm doing that.

As I said, it's a very furious competition out there, you just never know how any match will go. You might have beaten a player four, five times, or you might have lost, four, five times, but you know that there's always going to be an opportunity. I think there's so many opportunities you can miss overall, but there's also so much forward, to look forward to in any opportunity that comes ahead.

I never want to settle and play small, I just want to play big, and if I lose big or win big, it's the same thing for me. I just want to make sure that I give everything that I have for myself to put myself in this position and try my best.

Q. I know the tournament's not finished, but I want to say how benefiting about this China trip, so far? Is there some kind of special relationship with China?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: Yeah, on so many different levels for me, this trip means a lot to me. I wish I could expand more on that, but I think, definitely, I've been having so many different thoughts overall the past weeks, even leading up to that China swing. In a way, it's never easy, I think, when you come and you have committed to play for that many weeks in a row. I mean, I've been here for a month now, exactly a month. I love being in Asia, I love being in China, to be honest, that doesn't bother me at all, but you have, in a way, also quite a bit of time on your own. You have a little bit more time in between matches, so

your mind is wandering, your mind is going into places.

I can definitely say that this trip for me has been, not only special, but I think one of the most, how can I say, like almost spiritual for me on so many different levels, on and off the court.

I think, throughout the amount of emotions that I've gone through in that month, has been something I've never experienced in my life, and I feel like a big growth from it. I'm, of course, very positive about it in the same time, and it's very, I'm very thankful, honestly, I'm very thankful and appreciative of my situation.

Q. We talked to each other in Chengdu and also here, because in Chengdu you did pretty well, you finished as a semifinalist, and here, of course, you're already in the semifinals. It seems to me that you really enjoy your, as you mentioned, your Asian Swing here, and also particularly in China. Do you now really, at this stage, you believe that you could really win the whole thing here, because, you know, as I mentioned on court, you've already bettered your performance here in Shanghai.

GRIGOR DIMITROV: Well, I think, every time that I've had a good result at a place, I always want to be better, right, so that goes without saying. But again, in the same time, we have matches to be played.

I think this is the one thing that I always say that it doesn't matter whether it's the first match or it's the semifinal match or the final match, you need to go through those moments. I think those moments are yet to happen for me.

I don't want to think, you know, my best performance was quarterfinal, I don't know how many years ago, now my better performance is, you know, further ahead. No. For me, my best performance so far is today, my match. I think this will be the same every time that I get to compete, because the next moment matters to me. Not the moments that have passed, not the moments that are going to be far ahead, the moment right here, right now. I think this is one of the most difficult things to do overall, not just in our sport, but in life, to stay here, to stay here, to be right now, to be in now. I'm here, I'm talking, and I'm aware, and I want to enjoy that part of my daily life as well.

Last, but not least, when I get out there on the court, I want to embrace every single point that I play. I think if I'm able to achieve that on a better level and a higher level, my success rate is going to get even better and the results will come with it.

Q. Grigor, not only you're doing great in China, you're

doing great on the whole year. Never lost in the first two round in all Grand Slam, and back in the top 20. Is it fair to say it's your best season after 2017?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: Yeah, I think one of the best seasons, absolutely, no doubt about that. I think also, I mean, if I look back, also a little bit more in 2017 it is, I think it was, obviously, my best year overall in terms of winning, like tournaments and matches and all that, but it was also a fairly patchy year.

If I look back, I mean, I played throughout, some months I played really good, and then I had, I think, a moment about two, three months that I didn't really win that many matches, so it was, in a way, very patchy.

I prefer to be more consistent, because I think this is also where I feel like I'm building more and I'm learning more about myself, about my game, and what also works for me overall in order for me to perform more consistently. I think that's what I'm after right now. I mean, also I think I'm in a moment in my career where I need to be able to maintain a very good amount of work, as well. I cannot put myself in a position where I practice the way I practiced at 22, for example, or 25 or 26. I need to be also very cautious and mindful of where my body's at.

Of course, I never set myself any limits, but I need to be more kinder to myself in order for me to put myself in a position to be able to perform good at the very important tournaments.

So it's a very, I think, a delicate place where me and the team have taken into consideration, because we definitely cannot practice the way we used to practice before. I need to look after my body, as well, to the best way that I can.

Also, mentally, it's very important for me to be, as I said, rested, mindful, and to really set myself on the things that really matter to me when I get to a tournament.

Q. Congratulations, Grigor. There used to be a band named One-Handed Backhand Boys, including you, Tommy Haas and Roger Federer, and you actually sing a song together. Do you think one day maybe this band will be reunited some day?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: I don't know, I just saw Roger, so I guess we'll chat a little bit about it (smiling). I would love to, honestly, I would love to.

I think, unfortunately, our lives have gone separate ways (laughing). I mean, in a way, each in their own. I mean, we still, obviously, follow each other, and we're excited to see how life progresses and have a sneak peak at

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

everyone's moment.

I really would love to, honestly, I would really love for that one day. I believe it will. I cherish those moments so much that, maybe we'll come up with something when you guys least expect it.

Q. Grigor, could you please talk us through both of your potential semifinals, either with Rublev or Humbert?

GRIGOR DIMITROV: Yeah, I mean, both very good players, no doubt about that. I think Andrey is, for me, the player who's been so, so consistent throughout, I mean, year-in and year-out. Amazing guy, amazing player, not much to say on that end. You know what's going to happen. You know he's going to compete, you know he's going to hit everything that comes his way. I mean, overall, tremendous guy. I think I don't have enough words for him to describe on him.

Ugo, again, he's been winning a lot of good matches, against very tough opponents. He's a great competitor, a lefty, very tricky, especially in conditions like this here. So, it will be, I think, an interesting match between them two. But, yeah, for me, as I said, I'm going to look on my side of the net tomorrow and go after it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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