

Rolex Shanghai Masters

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Shanghai, China

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Novak, welcome back. How does it feel to be back in Shanghai for the first time in five years?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It feels great. I missed it. It's been awhile, as you said, five years, coming back to, honestly, one of the happiest places I've had in my career, a place, a country where I had plenty of success on the tennis courts, Beijing and Shanghai, many titles won, great memories.

A lot of great support from the fans here in China. They are probably the most unique, the most passionate fans and, you know, always so dedicated, daily waiting for you, giving you presents and really feeding you with a lot of love and energy. So that's something that I was very excited to experience once again. Yeah, I'm just enjoying my time so far in China.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. First of all, welcome back to China. Several male players from China have shown impressive performance, do you notice it, and can you give some advice to them to be a great player just like you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, I, of course, I notice. I actually practiced with Zhang last night at the center court. I think he broke the ice, I mean, he's the most successful male Chinese player. He's climbing the rankings, and he's helping also other players to believe that they can get to the high rankings.

I mean, woman's tennis in China has always had great success in history, particularly with Na Li, who is ex-No. 1 and multiple Grand Slam winner, great champion that has, you know, affected in a great way positively the growth of tennis in China. Now you have Qinwen that is obviously an Olympic champion, and she's now established top 10, top 5 in the world.

It seems like the future is bright for Chinese tennis in both men and women, both women and men's sides. I like to see that. You know, I was actually hoping that there's going to be men that are going to break to top 100, top 50 in the world, and now you have not one but several of

those guys that are really playing some good quality tennis.

I don't think that the dedication or putting in the effort was ever a problem. I think the Chinese mentality is such that, you know, they are, when they are dedicated to something, they're really dedicated to something, you can see that, you know, so working hard is not an issue here.

But it was just a kind of a wait for someone, on the men's side particularly, to really break through, so that others mentally can really believe that they have the quality, they have the capacity to go far.

So, you know, that's what's happening now. It will be very interesting to see, on the men's side, how the tennis players will evolve. I think it can only go up because of the good mentality and I guess the overall great investment in tennis. I mean, some of the best facilities, tennis facilities in the world, some of the best tennis stadiums in the world are here. You know, Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, all these cities have incredible facilities. Like, I don't think, you know, other than slams, we have these kind of facilities anywhere. So, yeah, I'm really happy to see, excited to see how the Chinese tennis will grow in the future.

Q. You've previously criticized the anti-doping system relating to the case of Jannik Sinner. I just wondered what your reaction was now that WADA has appealed the decision to clear him of wrongdoing, and how that might impact the tournament.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I think it's quite obvious that we have a system that is not working well. So, I guess that's probably something that even the people who are not following our sport are realizing. There's way too many inconsistencies, way too many governing bodies involved, and, you know, just this whole case is not helping our sport at all. I think he has won the three appeals so far that he had, and, you know, it must be very tough for him and his team and family.

Hopefully, we can go back to tennis and, I mean, it's impressive what he was been doing, in the whole process of what's been happening, that he's playing such a high



level, winning Grand Slam and, you know, winning most of the matches that he plays.

But that's not, you know, this situation or these circumstances are not positive for our sport, so hopefully we can resolve this case as soon as possible. Whatever's going to happen, at the end of the day, I just wish for it to be resolved as soon as possible. Yeah, that's all I have to say about that.

Q. You have the possibility of claiming a 100th career singles title here. With so many incredible milestones already, what would that one mean?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, as I've mentioned before, China has been a very successful and happy place for me. I've had great success on the Chinese soil, both Beijing and Shanghai. I haven't been here five years. I just love playing here, love the conditions, love the support that I get, and I also have an extra motivation of trying to go for my 100th title.

Yeah, I mean, that's all I can say at the moment. I'm trying to improve daily on my practice sessions. I play a lot of practice points, games, sets, and get to the desired level, because I haven't been playing too many tournaments lately, so I have some catching up to do with others.

Again, hopefully I can use that freshness in a way, and also the past experiences and success I had on this court for good success this year in the tournament as well.

Q. Welcome to Asia. So, as my colleague said, no other player just had the same good results, best results in Asian Swing, so unique. What is the secret behind this, and you have practiced yesterday and today, did you feel any differences, because Shanghai used to be as the fastest court before, but since last year I think it's changed.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I still think that the court is pretty fast. We discussed that, actually, players, yesterday and today on the court. The balls are different, so the balls probably slow down the game a little bit. It's still quite quick. If you have a good serve, it's a pretty big advantage.

US Open was much quicker than it was in the previous years, so I think we're kind of seeing the trend now, you know, with the courts speeding up, and for years they were slowing down. I understand that one of the reasons why is because US Open, for example, made their change, because there was way too many long matches, five-setters in the year before, previous years, and that messes up with the TV schedule and so forth.

I don't mind it, specifically, you know, I think, but I think it's important when you're making those changes that you are making those changes in a gradual way, rather than, you know, I felt like US Open speed of the court last year and this year is a lot different.

So, yeah, so I haven't played here five years, but I do remember that Shanghai always had quick courts, fast courts, and that you really have to serve well. You have to serve well, that's a big advantage, so that's what I'm personally working on.

The secret of me doing well in Asian Swing and in China? I just, I think I love dumplings and Chinese language, I think that helps (laughing).

Q. I wonder if you could describe how big your love for tennis still is.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: My love for tennis will never fade away. I have a lot of emotions when I'm playing, and not particularly only in the tournament, but also practice sessions. Sometimes it's not always going your way, but I think my relationship with tennis goes much deeper than a tournament or a year or success or failure, it's just, you know, a sport that I fell in love with when I was very young, and I still have the love for the sport.

Even when I retire from professional tennis, I feel like I'm going to stay in tennis, stay involved in, you know, in different roles, because I feel like I owe this sport a lot for what it has been giving to me. So, to put it into Chinese words I would say (In Chinese.) "My love for tennis is as deep as ever." Something like that.

I guess the Chinese, I see a lot of eyebrows being lift up, so probably missed a couple of words there, but for the further translation, please speak to the gentleman here (smiling). I have to work on my Chinese. I have regressed, I must say. Five years, it's been way too long, I have to practice.

Oh, yeah, another one, okay. Well, I'll put another sentence, trying to rectify my mistakes from the last one.

(In Chinese.) "I wish you peace." Okay? We got it.

(Applause.)

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