

Rolex Shanghai Masters

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Shanghai, China

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/A. Michelsen

7-6, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Novak, well done. How do you feel after five years to have the support of a full stadium here in Shanghai?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It felt great. All these days since I arrived to China and Shanghai, plenty of love and support. Today on the court was marvelous. To experience the introduction and the support and love from Chinese fans in this way is exactly the reason why I came.

I really missed being in Shanghai, I missed China. Five years is way too long for the kind of support that I'm getting here, so I want to thank everybody from bottom of my heart for coming out already in the first match, filling up the stadium, and creating a great atmosphere. Hopefully, they enjoyed it, it was a great match.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take a few questions.

Q. I just wondered, what's it like to face a new player at this stage of your career, and also what did you think worked well for you in the match?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I guess the older I'm getting, more new players I'm going to play, because they keep on coming up, which is normal part of the evolution of the sport.

I have watched Alex play the last couple years, but I've never faced him, and it's different when you're on court. These conditions I think are quite suitable to him. He has a big serve, he has attacking style of tennis, and, yeah, it was very challenging for me at times, particularly the beginning. He was all over me, I would say, in the first five games, and took me a little bit of time to get the rust off from not playing an official match for quite a few weeks.

So, yeah, I found the groove, I served well, and I thought we both played a quite high level of tennis for both sets, throughout the entire match the atmosphere was amazing.

Probably, you know, should have closed out the match early in the second set. I had chances, got a bit unlucky with some net courts there at 4-1 and 15-40, but at this level things can change very quickly, which is exactly what happened. It was anybody's set in the second set, tiebreak, point by point. So, yeah, just very glad to stay tough mentally, and calm when it mattered the most.

Q. The video of you speaking Chinese went viral in Chinese social media. Today you actually speaking Shanghai dialect. So, which one do you favor, and are you going to learn more, like Shanghai dialect or Chinese language in a week?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I think I have to master first the basics of the Chinese language in order to go into dialects. I think it was more of an attempt, or I tried to actually speak Shanghai dialect, but the people did not react very well to what I said. I said it twice, and, you know, until the moderator took the microphone and start speaking and I start repeating after him, then it made sense to people who were listening.

It's not an easy language to master, and I haven't practiced much in the last five years, I have to admit, so I need to do that. Hopefully, as the tournament progresses, both my tennis and Chinese language will improve.

Q. Obviously a tournament starter is always tough, but with all the support and love you've been receiving from Chinese fans, how much did the expectation from everyone, including yourself, I guess, to want to do exceptionally well, particularly this year, and the first time in five years, play into all that kind of tense atmosphere to make the early start even more difficult here this year?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: The expectations are always there. Any tournament I play, anywhere I play, any match I play, people expect me always to win. I'm used to that by now. I have, of course, expectations for myself. Any match, against anybody, anywhere, I want to win, so that's the kind of mentality that I've nurtured my entire career. It's no different here.

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You mentioned the fact that I haven't been here five years, and I think that brings me extra motivation, particularly because of the love and support that I've been getting today and all these days here in Shanghai. It's just remarkable. I'm very grateful to all the fans waiting in front of hotel, practice court here, I mean, it's just, I mean, I've been coming to China for so many years, but I don't think I've ever experienced this, this level, this intensity of support, it's just something that I'm very, how can I say, blessed with it, you know, very privileged to be in the position to be supported and followed by many people.

China loves tennis, and as a tennis player, being part of a big event like Shanghai Masters is amazing, particularly this year.

Q. I want to ask a question about Olympic games. Do you still watch the finals between you and Carlos, because in China the television stations always replay the match about Qinwen Zheng's finals for many times, and I want to know, do they do the same thing in Serbia, and do you watch?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I have not watched the full replay of my match in the Olympics finals, but I did watch highlights quite a few times, actually. Yeah, I watched that, I watched the celebrations after with my family. I watched the celebrations the day after, I think it was, plus, and I think it was in Trocadéro, where they made the path of a champion, or whatever they call it, a celebration of all the Olympic winners. And then the next day or a few days, Serbia, you know how we welcome in our country all the Olympic medalists. It was just something unique, remarkable, unforgettable, something I'll carry in my heart and my memories for the rest of my life.

I was very lucky also to have my wife and my kids there, you know, to experience it live, because it is the highlight of my career. You know, most intense emotions I every felt on the court were after winning a gold medal.

Q. From Beijing to Shanghai we saw you in a few sponsors activity, and you have interacted with so many fans. Of course, you had to train and win a match. Any tips to us common people how to live a high-energy life with such a busy schedule?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I mean, we all have different, I guess, routines, different life, different commitments. It's hard to compare, but, you know, what works for one maybe doesn't work for another person. I try to balance things out, and maybe it looks like I am living a perfectly balanced life, but trust me, it's not like that. You know, it's very challenging, and I'm trying to enjoy it as much as I can and learn, be the best father, husband I can be, along with a

tennis player, and, of course, son and brother as well.

I miss my family when I'm on the road, and at the same time I love tennis, I really do, and I have support from my closest ones to keep going, to keep playing. So, yeah, it's a constant, in a way, challenge to really, I guess, embrace the present and evolve and grow and learn from experiences that you get to live on a daily basis. So I, you know, I'm more than lucky in my life to experience everything that I have experienced, to have all these achievements. And, you know, I'm very grateful to God to give me this opportunity. So, I try to remind myself sometimes when I go through difficult times, like everybody else, you know, I have tough days, but, you know, you kind of remind yourself of what matters the most, the connections, the relationships with people, trying to be the best version you can be every day. I guess that's kind of the formula.

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