

Rolex Shanghai Masters

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Shanghai, China

Benjamin Balleret

Press Conference



V. VACHEROT/A. Rinderknech

4-6, 6-3, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Benjamin, congrats to you and your team. Are there any words to describe what you're feeling right now?

BENJAMIN BALLERET: Of course the feeling is amazing. Val is a ATP 1000 winner. Just being an ATP winner, when so many good guys who have 50 years career and doesn't have ATP title. So to have one right now for Val is amazing. But more than that what he's done this week, I mean, we knew he could play good tennis, but of course it's, what happened right now is just unexpected. We couldn't believe he could win this tournament. It grows match after match.

If I go a few days back, he won against Machac, and then he was just waiting for Jannik Sinner, to play against Sinner. And you're like, Okay, that's a great story. He will play Sinner. Maybe he will get destroyed, but it's a great tournament.

Then, okay, he doesn't play Sinner. It's one more match and then one more match. And then he plays Djokovic. And then you say, Okay, unbelievable. He can play Djokovic once in his life. And he ends up beating a not 100 percent Djokovic, but still beating him.

And just all the story to play Arthur in the final. I mean, it's like everybody say, like a movie, like a fairytale. So that's how we feel right now, in a fairytale.

Q. Talk about that third set. 17 winners, two unforced errors. He only lost two points on his serve. 16 of 18 points. That probably might be his best set he's ever played as a pro.

BENJAMIN BALLERET: I think beginning of the match Arthur was the better player, better energy.

Then the second set was a bit strange. A lot of serves. Not many rallies. From 4-3 in the second set that's where

the magic of Val happened. What you say, I mean, the end of the second and the third set was just amazing from Val.

I already saw him this state of mind of physical beast, you know. But to do it on the center court of Shanghai in the final against his cousin, you know, it's another thing. We know he can be like this. We already saw him play like this.

But to do it for not two games, three games, but for almost an hour to finish the match like this. At the end he had, I don't know, like eight break points in the third. He could have done, it could have been 6-1 for Val. But then Arthur's still there at 4-3. You never know what can happen with two good returns from Arthur, maybe serving a little bit less good.

So, yeah, I didn't know about the stats, but we were, like at the end of the match I was looking at Julien, the fitness coach, and it's like, Do you imagine what the first set he did to win this tournament? So, yes, we knew it was amazing, but, yeah, it's Val.

Q. I would like to ask if you can do a little step back to when you start a few years ago to work together. I know there is much more than tennis between you two, but you work with some amazing players before. I think on your side there was also great trust on his abilities as a tennis player. I would like to know a few years ago what you told each other about goals, about what you can do together.

BENJAMIN BALLERET: Yeah, actually when Val was turned 18 he had a couple choices to make. He wanted to be a professional tennis player, but he was not mature enough in the head, and also in the fitness. He was so skinny. He was not developed physically.

The family, we discussed it, and we advised him to go to America to college. To learn about tennis, to practice, you know, to have a great coach with Steve Denton.

So he listen to us, because in my mind it was, okay, he going to go to futures, he's going lose. Even if I help him,



it's going to take years for him to develop to be able to reach the top 100 or the top 50. That was my feeling and my idea about Val.

So he went to Texas. I did my coach career. I start with, had the chance to start with amazing player Gilles Muller who believe in me at the time. And we did two and a half years amazing.

I learned, I mean, coaching you learn every day. You don't learn two years and then you are the great coach. It was amazing with Gilles.

Then with Pierre-Hugues we had almost five years and it was again great. He's an amazing person, but I also learned a lot.

I always had in mind that, and also Val, when he's coming back to college, if he still wants to be a pro, then he wanted me to help him, and I wanted also to help him because he's my brother. And I think that doesn't matter. I mean, if you have the best quality or not, if you really work, and you want it so much, then you have to go all the way. It doesn't matter if you reach your, if you reach the 200 spot or the top 50, if you want to go, you go full to reach your full potential. You never know what can happen. If you are 200, then you can be 150. If you are 150, then you can be 100. Just always put another goal, another goal.

So, yeah, at the end he came back summer of 2021. We went from there, from zero. It's also why you see so much emotion today. Because it's a long way and sometimes you lose a little bit faith, you know. Bad losses, you know. It's difficult emotionally because it's family, you know, it's not only a player you work with, which is already difficult because, I mean, you want it so much. But when it's your brother it's even more.

So there was some ups and downs. To be here in front of you guys today as Val is a Masters 1000 champion, it's just unbelievable.

Q. You just made history for Monaco. I'm just curious, would you like to share what was happening, and what's the feeling and the reaction of people in Monaco.

BENJAMIN BALLERET: I don't know. I'm here with you. I will get some videos, for sure, from friends about what happened in Monaco. When we come back we will see. Right now I just know, because some friends told me, that it's crazy in Monaco.

That's also why I think Val won this tournament. Because Val is someone who loves his country so much. Okay,

family, country, you know. Growing during the week, all the messages he get, all the love he get from the country, for sure, a hundred percent help him winning matches.

Because you can see, he's winning 6-4 in the third, three hours, and he keep believing also because he has all his country behind him. As I say, it's not one thing, it's a million little things and it's Monaco is part of those little things.

Q. I guess you're kind of in uncharted territory now because, as you say, you didn't really, couldn't really imagine this would happen. But what's next? What's your instinct about what you guys will do immediately after?

BENJAMIN BALLERET: Next will be the tournaments where Val wanted to be all his life. The big ones. I mean, the real ones, you know. That's what we say when we congratulate just after the match. We say, It's amazing, you know, congratulations. But already we say we want to keep going. I told him right away, like, Amazing. We're going to keep going. We're going to go again. We're going to go again full. And we'll see what happens next.

But that's how I see things, you know, just play your career full, a hundred percent, and don't look back. Just work and we'll see at the end.

Q. Not only breaking top 100, now top 50, which is just amazing to do what he's done now just here in Shanghai. Talk about just making that huge jump from outside 204. Which was your career high ranking too, by the way.

BENJAMIN BALLERET: That was my best ranking, and he's 204 this week and he's doing that. I don't know what to say. When we were putting goals for Val it was not only top 100, because it seems a little, you know, like, oh, for some guys, we just want to be top 100. No, it's like, Let's go. We want to be top 50, top 30, you know. You have more, even more ambition.

But sometimes, as I said before, you lose a bit of faith, you know. So our role as the coach and all the team is to be behind him and to push him and to tell him that he believes that he can be a top-50 player. Because I think so many players stop believing.

When you're playing, you lose every week in tennis. So you always have to believe. I think that's super important.

But the team and the people, the family around you always tell you the things, you know, like, You're going to do it. You win one match, it's not enough, you need another one.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

It's good, but let's go again. Let's go again. So that's how we roll as a team, to push him. And of course in one week, you know, this jump is, I don't know. As I said, it's not something we were thinking about. It's more like Val always had did really small steps, never big jump, and step after step. And right now this happened, so I don't know what to say.

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