

# Sydney Tennis Classic

Sunday, 9 January 2022

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

## Alexei Popyrin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, Alexei Popyrin. What's it like to be at home?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Thank you. Yeah, it's amazing to be at home. I haven't been in Sydney for I think since the last time the tournament actually happened, so it's really amazing to be home.

I remember playing here when I was a kid, training here on these courts, exactly on these courts. You know, to be able to come here and compete in front of the home crowd, it's something amazing, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

**Q. You say it's amazing. Does it put a little bit more pressure on you because it's a home court, and you have grown up over here? How do you feel on that score?**

ALEXEI POPYRIN: No, no pressure at all. If anything, it pumps me up even more. You know, I was here watching the tournament when I was a kid. I remember I got one of Igor Andreev's sweat bands, and I was really hyped about that one (smiling).

Yeah, look, I never feel that much pressure going out into any court, anywhere, any moment. Yeah, so for me it's just, you know, it's just a blessing to be here. Then to be able to compete in my home city in front of a home crowd on home courts, I'm just going to go out there and enjoy every moment of it.

**Q. Do you remember the first match you ever saw over here live?**

ALEXEI POPYRIN: One that stands out I think was Daniel Guccione was playing singles on Ken Rosewall Arena, and I remember watching that match. I think he won it, but I don't remember who he played and what the score was, but I remember watching that match, yeah.

**Q. Last year was your most successful year. It's still a very young career for you. As you look to 2022, what's the main objective for you?**

ALEXEI POPYRIN: I think it's to be a bit more consistent than I was last year. Last year I started the year off really

well. Got my first title.

After that, I kind of kept that level, you know, had some tight losses against some really good players. For example, Medvedev, Khachanov. Had a pretty solid clay court season. Then after the clay court season, after French Open, it kind of went downhill from there.

So mid last year, it was like kind of where I was kind of stuck, not confident in my game, not playing the best tennis that I could have played.

For me, I think that's something that I need to work on is to try and not be too down on myself after losses and try and get back out there and just believe in myself, because that's probably the most important thing is that the belief that I have in myself, the belief in my capabilities that I can get to where I want to get.

If I just remind myself of that every single day and keep working, then I'm sure the consistency will come, and hopefully the results will come too.

**Q. On the point of getting to where you want to get, you're just shy of your career-best ranking at 61. It was 59. Have you set a goal, a target for 2022, and by a specific period?**

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Not really. I think any season you go into, as my coach likes to say, if you half your ranking, then you have done a pretty good job. I reckon if I half my ranking, say, top 30, then that it would be a good job for me.

Obviously I aim higher than that. I am higher than top 30. For now, I think the smaller goal is to get into the top 50, and then from then on, keep pushing, keep working, let the results speak for themselves, and then the ranking will come either way if the results go well.

**Q. First up is Pedro Martinez. You haven't played him before, so what are your thoughts going into that match?**

ALEXEI POPYRIN: I think it's going to be a tough match, tough grind. He's a Spanish guy, Spanish player, top 60 in the world. He can play. He can play tennis. But, you know, I'm playing at home. I'm playing with the crowd behind me. I'm playing on my home courts, courts that I

grew up on.

So I know these courts like the back of my hand, so it's going to be a good match, and I'm looking forward to get out there. I know what I have to do.

Me and my team are going to sit down, going to scout him, going to figure out the right tactics to play against him. We will go out there and enjoy and try and use those tactics and make sure that they come out.

**Q. Most of the players during the offseason will go off to the beaches and Maldives and places like that. You went to Africa, had a bit of a run-in with a couple of elephants?**

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah. So my girlfriend is from Zimbabwe, was born there. She wanted to show me her homeland, where she grew up. That's somewhere where the elephants like to roam around (smiling.)

No, it was an unbelievable experience. I got to meet her family, and we got to go see some amazing wildlife. We went on game drives, went to Victoria Falls, saw about 300 elephants at one time, just roaming around and drinking out of a water hole. We saw 50 alpaca, 15 lions, it was amazing.

You know, going on safari is something that I dreamed of going on as one of my, not goals, but, yeah, it was one of my dreams to go on safari at least once in my life, and I got to do that this year and that was quite amazing.

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