

# Sydney Tennis Classic

Friday, 14 January 2022

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

## Andy Murray

Press Conference



A. MURRAY/R. Opelka

6-7, 6-4, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Congratulations. How good do you feel?**

ANDY MURRAY: Yeah, it's obviously great to be in another final. A tough match again. You know, it was always going to be tight against him. There is not many chances either way usually.

Yeah, obviously after losing the first set, felt like quite a long way back but stayed tight on my serve. Served well last couple of sets and I think overall played a pretty smart match. Didn't really give him loads of opportunities. And, yeah, was a good win.

**Q. There was a lot of support from the crowd for you, sentimental favorite and all that. How much did that help you?**

ANDY MURRAY: Yeah, it was good, because, you know, there wasn't loads of people in the crowd. You know, against him, because of the way that a lot of the points go and the games go, it can sometimes be a little bit flat.

And, yeah, I think once the second set, once I started to get a better read on his serve and there was more sort of, I guess, entertaining points and things and tight games and everything, the crowd got into it and created a nice atmosphere out there.

**Q. I know you have played giants in size and a lot of big, big servers before, but when you are in a situation, you lose a tight first set as you did, how do you stay in the moment to keep on going and turn things around as you did?**

ANDY MURRAY: So after the first set I was thinking like, I mean, I don't think he had any breakpoints in the first set. I felt like I had created a few more opportunities, missed a few first serves in the tiebreak, and, you know, he played some good points in the breaker. But, yeah, it was obviously a tight one to lose.

Then in the second set I was like, well, if I can keep getting a read on his serve or a better read on his serve, you know, I am going to get chances. Not many, but I will get some. And it was just about obviously trying to take them when they came, and I was really happy, like I said, with my serve and how solid I was on that. I served smart. Used all of the different spots on the court, and second serve was really good. You know, that was kind of what I had to tell myself is that I was going to get the chances if I stayed in there.

**Q. Your first final since Antwerp 2019. You don't know who you're going to play. Both Evo and Karatsev, you have never played either of them before, so if you could look at first playing Evo, and if it will be Evo, it will be, I understand, the first all-Brit final on the ATP Tour. If you could first look at playing Evo and then look at playing Aslan, please.**

ANDY MURRAY: I don't mean to correct you on this, but we call him Evo rather than Evo (smiling). But, yeah, he's obviously, in the last couple of years, has played really well. I think he likes the conditions in Australia. I think he won his first tournament in Melbourne last year, and yeah, he has a very sort of -- he just has a different game to a lot of players on the tour. Uses a lot of slice backhands, he likes to come into the net, you know, very sort of fiery character, gets pumped up in matches and competes well.

And then Karatsev, yeah, I have never played against him. I have practiced with him one time in the grass last year. Yeah, he's obviously a huge, huge ball striker. Really strong guy. Huge pair of calves on him. Yeah, he obviously had an unbelievable run in Australia, I think it was last year he made, I think it was the semis he made. Again, he obviously likes it here, enjoys the conditions.

Yeah, whoever it is, it's not going to be an easy match. Yeah, another, you know, good one for me to play ahead of the Australian Open.

**Q. This news will have broken while you were on court, but I think I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't ask you for any reaction to what's come out that the immigration minister has decided to deport Novak Djokovic. It's obviously been the biggest story over here, and I imagine even bigger in Australia for the**

**last week, and it's escalated again.**

ANDY MURRAY: Yeah, I mean, it's not a good situation. I'm not going to sit here and start kicking Novak whilst he's down. I mean, I said it the other day, it's not a good situation for anyone.

It's unfortunate that it's ended up in this sort of situation, and who knows? I don't know what the process is from now. I don't know what route he goes down, if he can appeal that and, you know, how long that takes, and can he still be out practicing whilst that process is going on or still competing in the tournament? I have no idea what the situation is with that.

Yeah, just want it obviously to get resolved. I think it would be good for everyone if that was the case. It just seems like it's dragged on for quite a long time now, and yeah, not great for the tennis, not great for the Australian Open, not great for Novak.

Yeah, obviously a lot of people have criticized obviously the government here, as well. It's not been good.

**Q. Maintaining on that same topic regarding Djokovic, the latter issue I think has been mentioned a lot. It comes down to whether the decision should be left to an individual regarding getting vaccinated or not. Where do you stand on that? Is it time for the ATP and other tennis bodies to come up with a vaccine mandate?**

ANDY MURRAY: Look, my feeling is that I would encourage people to get vaccinated, but yeah, I do feel like people should be able to make their own decision. But then, yeah, in a country like Australia, you know, you need to be vaccinated to come in, need to be vaccinated to compete here, and yeah, and obviously most of the players have chosen to do that.

Pretty much all of the top 100 tennis players -- I don't know what it is on the women's side, but I think they've got like 98% or something of the top 100 men's players have been vaccinated, which is positive.

But yeah, ultimately people have to make their own choices. But there is also consequences sometimes for those decisions, as well. Yeah, my belief and what I have seen and read and looked at the data and everything, especially recently, in the UK anyway, is that the lady who gave me my third jab, she works in the hospital in Central London, and she told me that every single person that is in ICU and on ventilators are all people that are unvaccinated. So to me, it makes sense, you know, for people to go ahead and have it done. Yes, most young, sort of healthy athletes are probably going to be okay, but yeah, we've all got to play our part in this one, I think.

**Q. How important is it for you to make a big run early in the year to kind of set the tone? Obviously last year you were playing, at the end of the year, playing at a high level. And just how important is it -- I saw your reaction to the previous question. I know you talked before about how frustrating, when you're making a big run and playing really well, to have to talk about things other than that?**

ANDY MURRAY: Yeah, the same thing happened to me with a number of topics last year, as well. Yeah, I get and appreciate that we can't just talk about tennis all of the time, and there is other things that go into it, but yeah, I just feel that every single time, you know, like whilst I'm here, every single time I come into a press conference, you know, I would much rather be talking about my own tennis, I have put so much work and effort into getting back into these positions and to be competing for tournaments again and looking forward to playing in the Australian Open for the first time in three years, and, you know, discussing that and looking at the positive things, whereas, you know, this is the second or third time this week I have been in here and I'm talking about stuff that's going on with another player off the court.

Yeah, hence why I say it's not great for tennis, because we are talking about other stuff and politics and all of those things. Yeah, I would rather be talking about how delighted and happy I am that I'm back in the final of a tournament again.

**Q. And how important this is, this run for you.**

ANDY MURRAY: Yeah, I think like all of the tournaments that I'm competing in just now are important, because ultimately, you know, the ranking is not something that -- it's not a goal of mine to get to a specific ranking, like in the next year, but, you know, improving your ranking and getting yourself up into the top 50, top 30, top 20, you know, allows you to be seeded in tournaments, and, you know, potentially makes it easier to have better draws or, you know, to have a better run in a major event rather than, for example, like playing Tsitsipas in the first round, you know, like I did at the US Open. And then, yeah, playing seeds in the first rounds of slams, obviously you can avoid them with the ranking being high enough.

Yeah, there is many positive things to having good runs in these tournaments. I didn't have to worry so much about that before, but yeah, something that, you know, there is a lot of positives to doing well in the smaller events.

**Q. When you spoke about your racquet, your new racquet the other day, people were very excited on Twitter, because I think people do get excited about tennis racquets, and why not? Can you just tell us a**

**bit more about why you made the change you said you hadn't made in two decades and whether you think it's made a massive difference to you this week at all?**

ANDY MURRAY: I mean, I don't know if it's made a massive difference, but yeah, I think it's something I have been looking at for a number of years and had tested some different racquets here and there, but, you know, really kind of after Wimbledon last year, you know, I tested a lot of racquets, you know, with Head.

I tried different models, you know, other players' racquets, and yeah, finally just stuck with one that was very similar to mine, the same weight, the same balance, same string pattern. But yeah, just a slightly larger head, went from a 95 square-inch head to a 98 square-inch head. Yeah, just maybe gives a little bit more spin, a little bit more easier depth on the ball, and it's just, yeah, slightly more forgiving because the sweet spot is a little bit larger.

Yeah, thankfully it's been working well so far. You know, it's slightly different when you're playing in hot conditions like in Melbourne, for example, where it's, you know, bouncing a lot and very hot on the court. You know, the ball's flying a bit more. But yeah, like here playing kind of indoors and stuff, it's nice, it's worked well, and yeah, hopefully keeps going that way.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports