

Brisbane International

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Rafael Nadal

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Rafa, welcome back to Brisbane.

RAFAEL NADAL: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Just your thoughts on being back here after so many years, just getting used to being back on court.

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, good. Happy to be back. Even if I only played - if I am not wrong - once here because was 2017, then I come back in 2018. I have been practicing around here for the whole week, but I was not able to play because I had a small injury.

Both times I had very positive memories, no? Both times I think have been an amazing week of enjoyment and of preparation, too. Even if the results in 2017 was not perfect, was a good comeback for me after a while.

If I remember, I lost to Milos Raonic in quarterfinals. That was a good way to be back and a good way to prepare Australia that finally I made that final in 2017 after a few years without being in that position.

Good feelings to be back. I think that's why I decided to be here the first week of the season. I decided to be here on my comeback because I had positive feelings from the past. I wanted to come back in a place that was familiar for me and place that bring me back to good memories.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Rafa, I heard you say earlier in the year this was probably going to be your last season on tour. Are you more sure of that now or will this be the last time you play in Australia? Where is your head at with that?

RAFAEL NADAL: The problem about saying that's going to be my last season is I can't predict what's going on 100% on the future. That's the thing. That's why I say 'probably'.

It's obvious that it's a high percentage that's going to be my last time playing here in Australia. But if I am here next year, don't tell me, You said going to be your last season, because I didn't say it (smiling). I just say have

been an important percentage.

You never know what's going on, you know? I can't predict how I going to be in the next six months. I can't predict if my body will allow me to enjoy tennis as much as I enjoyed the past 20 years. I don't know if my body will allow me to be competitive. I mean, not in a way to win the most important events, but the way that makes me happy, feel myself competitive to go on court and to feel that I can compete against anyone.

Doesn't matter at the end of the day if I win or don't. If I have that feelings... You never know what's my approach because at the end I went through a lot to be back on a tennis court.

It's not an easy decision, but I know inside myself that is a high percentage it's going to be my last one.

Q. You talk about the physicality of how you're feeling. Andy described your session yesterday as intense. He thought it was at a very good level. How do you feel coming out of that? After another session earlier in the week with Rune, what's the mark for you this week?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I mean, if you ask my colleagues how I feel, they will not come here and say, Rafa is playing like disaster. It's obvious, no? I feel what they said have not much value because, of course, you ask me how they're playing, I will say they're playing great, too. You will not talk negative things about colleagues (smiling).

But no, in a realistic world, I'm happy the way that I am practicing. Of course, I don't have the expectations that I used to have in the past, especially for the beginning. It's obvious, no? It's one year. It's surgery. It's not a long period of time practicing in a decent level. For me is a little bit unpredictable how the things going to be, no?

In terms of how the things going to go in competition, it's completely very difficult to say, no? Competing is different than practicing. But in terms of practicing with the guys here, I am quite happy because I am able to feel myself competitive against the players that I played on the practice basis. That's a lot for me because I don't know one month ago if I will have the chance to come here or feel myself enjoying on the practices with the guys because have been a possibility I come here

practicing with the guys and I feel, Okay, I am not ready to compete.

Before the tournament start, I feel ready to compete. Then what can happen in the competition, I can't know. I don't know.

Q. After the practice session yesterday, Andy said he really missed getting the chance to play guys like you and Novak, having been out for so long. Have you missed playing against someone like that? Having played him at the peak of his powers, what do you notice about his game?

RAFAEL NADAL: Andy?

Q. Yes.

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, he demonstrate an amazing passion and love for the game. That's the true, no? After a very tough surgery that he went through, he hold the passion and the working spirit to be where he is today. Something very difficult.

When you achieve all the things that Andy achieved for such a long time, and coming back knowing it will be super difficult to come back to that level of tennis and accept the challenge and accept the situation, it's something that goes beyond the tennis, no?

It's a very positive example of passion and positive example for the kids about how somebody we had almost everything he wanted, he achieved almost everything, he hold the passion for his game and for his work at the end. That's a very positive example.

I missed to feel myself ready to compete. I didn't miss the competition because during all this period of time, my body was not ready to compete. So when you feel that bad, you can't miss the competition.

What I miss is be healthy, honestly. Wake up and don't have pain. Have the chance to have a normal life because during the last year, for such a lot of months, I was not able to have a normal life and enjoy playing golf or doing the normal things that I like to do with my friends or with my family. That's what I missed the most.

Then when I starting to feel myself ready, like now, of course I am excited to come back to the tennis courts and excited to come back to the competition. Is something that I loved.

If I don't have the determination to do it and the passion, as I said before from Andy, I will not be here.

Q. We heard from Naomi Osaka yesterday. She's making a comeback back. During her break she said she did have a moment where she contemplated

retirement. She's had to learn to fall back in love with tennis. Was there a moment in the last year where you have kind of thought about that moment and said, Is it worth putting my body through this anymore?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I think Naomi and I completely different situation. I think Naomi, if I'm not wrong, she said that she lost a little bit the love for the game for a while and the passion for the game. Something that never happened to me. So the biggest difference. She gets tired or lost little bit the motivation for this game or for this thing. That never happened to me. I had to be away because my body was not able to keep going.

If I thought about retirement during that period of time? Of course, yes. I had to went through a lot of things to be back. Sometimes, of course, in the low moments, it's 100% human that you put yourself in a position to say, Okay, makes sense all the things I have to do to be back at 37 years old, knowing probably you will be back and you will not be healthy enough to compete the way that you wanted to compete. Something of that, of course, I was asking to myself. At some point I decided to keep going, no? I had the determination to keep going.

When I have that determination, I know sometimes going to be a painful process in terms of working without knowing how the things going to be. But then I just tried to work day by day without thinking much, just doing the things that I had to do, expect the things goes well.

Here we are. I don't know what's going to happen. The only thing that I am happy is I am here in a position to come back again on a professional tour. You never know what's going on when that happens. I am excited about what can happen.

Q. Can you speak about your recovery process, your first practices, how difficult it was to come back at this level.

RAFAEL NADAL: It's a long story because have been different phases. After Australia at the beginning we thought that after eight weeks we will be back. That's what they told me. That phase was difficult to accept because at the end, as you can imagine, my biggest goal was come back for the clay court season, and especially for the last part of the clay court season. The doctors were very positive about that when the injury happened. That process probably have been the most difficult one.

After eight weeks I felt that I was very similar to the beginning in terms of injury. I was week after week, the frustrating higher and higher. Frustration have been higher and higher because it was Monte-Carlo, then Barcelona, then Madrid, then Rome situation have been the same. The most important goal for me was Roland Garros. That's when I had to make my press conference

and say I can't keep going.

In that moment I didn't know that I had to go for a surgery process. Then we come back to doctors. We had a different opinions. Finally they decide that if we don't have the surgery, probably I will never be back. Then have been the moment that you have to make a decision.

If I don't want to keep going playing tennis, I don't need it. I didn't need to make a surgery. So then was the decision to try it or not try it. The decision was positive that I wanted to try to come back. That's why I went to the surgery.

After the surgery, I wanted to go for holidays, but the first six weeks I have been at home for doing the first part of the recovery the perfect way. Then I went for holidays for a while. I come back and started to practice 15 minutes, 20 minutes. At the beginning was a tough process, too. Then the improvement was there.

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