

Brisbane International

Tuesday, 31 December 2024

Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/R. Hijikata

6-3, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Congratulations. How did you pull up after the doubles yesterday? Probably a slightly different feeling, different sort of muscles being used, I guess, rather than just a normal singles match?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, it's obviously a different match, the way you feel on the court, the way you play, the way you approach the warmup, and I think the preparation. So I don't play doubles much. But, you know, I couldn't miss the opportunity to play with Nick in his comeback. I think a lot of people were kind of excited to see us on the court together.

I had a lot of fun. Honestly, it was a great doubles match. I look forward to tomorrow's one, as well.

As far as for singles, I think the match was really solid. Hijikata played well. After he was Love-3 down he started to raise his game, I think. I started off extremely well and pretty much the whole match kept the level except a few moments. I had a few dips here and there, but, you know, I think he served well. He made me work, particularly in the second set, for my win.

You know, since 3-All in the second, I think I raised my game and broke his serve twice and really ended up the match in style. I think serving helped a lot. My serving both in doubles and singles was terrific. Been working on it. So great to see that I'm able to get, every game, at least one or two free points. That helps a lot, you know, on a surface like this.

It was a good start, good start of the season, no doubt.

Q. Is that the biggest part about this tournament for you, just making sure you're just ironing out those little things?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah.

Q. I know it's not a particularly short offseason but just ironing out, finessing a bit ahead of Melbourne

in a couple of weeks?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, it is, but at the same time, I really want to try to go far in this tournament. I know a lot of people that come and watch me play and pay tickets, they don't want to come and watch me practice. They want to watch me compete and try to win.

I go with that kind of attitude out on the court, but it is true that the kind of a big goal is Melbourne, trying to iron out my shots and make sure that I am at my best for the first match in Melbourne.

Q. I appreciate you're probably going to be sick of talking about him at some point, but I'm curious, since you have been working with Andy, has there been anything about his perspective towards tennis or even towards your past matches that have surprised you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Just overall very nice and strange feeling to have him on the same side of the court (smiling). You know, we've been rivals for 20-plus years and always kind of kept secrets from each other, the way we practiced, the way we prepared, the way we approached the matches. Never wanted to show weakness to your main opponents, your rivals.

But now it's different. You know, we spent eight, nine days together and shared a lot of information even before we met, and then together for those eight, nine days was really great, quality time on and off the court, getting to know each other I think on a different level we haven't had a chance to have in the past 20 years.

So to have a legend of the game, someone that is known to be as an intelligent tennis player as there is out there, it's a great honor, great pleasure for me.

I love talking to him about the nuances, the details, how I can improve my game, how I can, yeah, gain an inch, court positioning more comparing to my opponent, and every bit of percentage counts at the highest level.

So what I have been getting from him already, you know, is really positive. But, you know, we haven't spent too many days on the court together, so I look forward to having him in Melbourne.

Q. In those conversations, did you sort of almost



concede that you had to find something to change to keep up with these younger guys? Even tonight we saw Giovanni, they're saying he's changing the way tennis is played. Obviously Jannik and Carlos have done similar. Are you looking for something different, or do you think you have to change anything to...

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I'm not looking to transform my game completely. I mean, I'm not going to be Giovanni serving two first serves and coming in to the net (smiling), but I definitely am looking to improve, even if it's the slightest percentage, every single shot that I have in my game, and maybe something that people don't necessarily see is this court positioning, the transition play, the tactics. Yeah, just focusing mostly on myself, really, how I can be better physically, game-wise, mentally, as well.

And ready to compete, whatever it takes, however many hours it takes with the youngsters. And then, of course, you know, I think in the upcoming weeks, we will also, particularly the week before Australian Open, do a lot of video analysis of my main opponents, top guys, trying to understand how my game matches up against theirs and what I have done in the past well, what I can improve.

So there is quite a bit of analytics in there, and I am that kind of person. I like to go into details. But when the tournament starts, I like to keep things conceptually simple and the base needs to be there, and then of course there is always something each day that kind of surfaces that you need to address.

Q. Next game gains Gael Monfils. I guess you have played him a lot over the years. What are you expecting from that game and how he might be testing you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Expecting for streak to go on, unbeaten streak against Gael (smiling). We saw each other in the locker room after our matches today, and we had a talk about it. It's awesome. He's a year older than me. He's still going strong.

He was always one of the best athletes that we have on the tour. Flexibility, agility, speed, you know, strength, it's just exceptional with him.

He's a super guy. You know, we have known each other since the junior days and played many matches against each other. I look forward to it. You know, I think he's preferring these kind of conditions, you know, where the surface is slightly quicker, and so he can get points off his first serve. His first serve can be really a big weapon if he's feeling good about it, which seems to be the case.

Last year he beat Alcaraz in Cincinnati, which, in terms of the speed of the surface, similar to here and is quite

quick. So if you serve well and go through your service games and put pressure on your opponent, and he moves as well as anybody, really. He's shown that he's got incredible agility and huge defense, and so he's also really crafty on the net.

So he's been all-around player for so many years and great to still be able to play him at this level, you know, as veterans of the game. So it should be fun.

Q. Great to see you, Novak. My question is about Goran, as Kazakhstan is very excited and happy to have Goran with Rybakina who has just started working in Perth with him. What is your impression when you heard about this news?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I was actually happy, because we talked about -- you know, we actually like Rybakina, the way she plays and how she is as a person. When Goran used to work with me, we always liked to watch her play.

So I was happy to hear the news that they are together. Hopefully Goran can contribute in a positive way to her game, to her success. I mean, she's a top player. She's won a Grand Slam already, and she knows how that feels. You know, I'm sure she's hungry for more and she seems to be very motivated. She started off the season, I saw, with a couple of good wins.

So I wish them all the best. You know, I texted Goran the other day. He hasn't worked, I don't think he's ever worked on WTA Tour. Maybe he didn't work for long time, but, you know, he was mostly on the ATP Tour. So I asked him how it feels and everything, and it's a bit different for him, but he's pumped to help her out, and hopefully we can see them lifting some big trophies together.

Q. Last year you talked a lot about playing a limited schedule and focusing almost entirely on the slams and the big events.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah.

Q. It seems maybe this year there has been maybe a tiny shift in that?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: We'll see. It's just the beginning of the season. I mean, I have the next kind of five, six months' calendar in my head, you know, possible scenario. But, you know, still have to review post-Australia.

I'm actually committed to play Doha, and then I have to see, you know, Indian Wells, Miami, and I wish to play both, but we have to see how I feel and talk with the team.

And just manage the schedule right, because I want to peak at the biggest tournaments. Slams, obviously, but also Masters events, the Masters events that I'd like to play my best tennis.

So yeah, let's see. It seems to me that I'm going to play slightly more tournaments this season, but I have to see how it goes. It's just the beginning.

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