

Brisbane International

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Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/G. Monfils

6-3, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. 20-zip is pretty impressive. Probably quite difficult to say what it comes down to. What is it about Gael's game that seems to work for you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I mean, his game suits me well. To some extent the more you win against someone, the happier you are to play him (smiling).

Yeah, I mean, we had some really tough battles. He had a couple of matches where he was one point away. I think in Dubai a few years ago he had a couple match points and should have won that match. It just happens. When you are on a bad roll, it is also affecting you mentally.

But I think he deserves a great credit for playing still at such a high level at his age. He's so athletic, super guy. Super nice guy that is loved by millions of people - with a reason. He's a great entertainer, great charisma. The best dancer we have on the tour, that's for sure. He's been around. He's been top-10 player. Played a lot of late stages of Grand Slams. He loves the big stage, the big stadiums.

It was a special match in a way playing a 37-year-old versus 38-year-old on the tour in the first tournament of God knows what season of ours that we have in our career. I mean, I enjoyed it. I think it was a good quality match.

I think he had just couple of loose games first, second set that allowed me to break his serve. It was I think tighter than maybe the score indicates.

Q. You're very clinical, with break points... That must be very pleasing at this stage of the season, being so on it.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Of course. I mean, you want to make a statement to yourself and to others that you are able to convert particularly break points when they're presented.

I know that I have a good reputation with my return. I mean, that's great. You still have to make shots. You still have to put pressure on the opponents. I think my return was really awesome today. I was very happy about it. Whenever I could get my racquet on a ball, I made him play. That definitely put a lot of pressure on his serve, which was really good today. He had a high percentage of first serves in.

Going into the quarters now against Opelka, one of the best servers in the game. Great guy. Again, someone that struggled with injuries the last few years. Just awfully frustrating to play against, like Isner in his best days. Mpetshi Perric, as well. Youngster, big guy, huge serve.

Sometimes you're more walking in the return games than you're actually playing. You have to get used to that. When the opportunities are presented, in the tiebreak or maybe before, you try to put that pressure on your server. That's what I've been able to do most of the times in my career.

I think the performance tonight gives me a great deal of confidence coming into tomorrow.

Q. I saw a video of you at the F1 a few weeks ago getting a very in-depth tutorial from George Russell. You're interested in data. How much do you use it when scouting opponents and how much is too much, as someone who plays on instinct?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Your second question is straight to the point. I think that's great and very relative, how much is too much.

It really depends individually on the person. We are part of the individual sport, so each of us is a little bit different and we all try to, I guess, prepare in a way for the match that suits us best.

Some players like to receive as less information as possible and kind of more follow their instinct automatically, just feel the opponent on the court, I guess. Some other players love going to the details.

I'm more in the second group. I really like data. Video analysis particularly. I'm quite a visual type of guy. I like to get a sense of patterns of play of my next opponent. I

put throughout my career a lot of time and resources into that, along with my other team members.

It was super impressive to witness and experience the Formula 1 with George Russell, who was very nice to give me a tour. Took me to their technical room to meet the data and tech team. I think it could be maybe 15 people that is working there on the computers, each person for a specific technical element.

I mean, I felt like in Disneyland a little bit because I believe that there's a lot of beneficial things that you can get out of the data. Then, of course, how do you transfer it or translate to the court is the key, right? Everyone can see data, read data, but how do you get that on the court to actually work for you efficiently?

Once I'm in the tournament, I like to keep things conceptually to remind myself of what I need to do and what my next opponent is doing well or maybe not that well. But then keep it more simple than comparing to the weeks prior to the tournament, where I really go and try to deconstruct my game, the game of the other players, really look for the nuances that can help me get better.

Q. Was that something you've always been interested in?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah. I have always been very interested in that. My first serious tennis coach, my tennis mother as I like to call her, she passed away 2012, but she taught me all the fundamentals of the right approach and the mindset to the tennis since a very young age, I think eight or nine years old when I was a very young boy.

She was taking me to her house after training sessions, between tennis sessions and school, and I would be learning about the importance of listening to classical music or the video analysis, all these different things that at that time I didn't really understand much, but I was following because of course I had to. I had tremendous respect for her. Then I learned later why that is giving me incredible foundation.

I was always very analytical, which I think also allowed me to endure so long at the top level. I'm always looking to improve my game. I know that not everyone but most of the top guys who have aspirations to be the best, they're doing that, right? They have big teams of people. I've never held back on investing in my team, investing in the technology that can help me be better.

Q. A bit of a lighthearted one. Hopefully you can confirm or deny for us. Social media loves a theory. There's been a lot of talk around the Pikachu backpack that you rolled in with on Saturday.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: We'll see (smiling).

Q. Is there anything to it? Number 25 is Pikachu. Does it mean anything?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: All I can say is my kids, particularly my son, loves Pikachu. Subtle subliminal messages.

Q. Was is their bag or yours?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It's his bag. It's his bag. But I was carrying it on my bag going out from the airport.

Q. Have you seen what's been being discussed?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I have seen. It makes me laugh. I love it.

Q. Around the prize money for tennis players, Nick Kyrgios has been active around he doesn't think tennis players are paid enough in comparison to other sports. The stats are out there that it's a lower percentage that tennis players get. Does that need to change, from a PTPA viewpoint?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I'm just going to state a fact. It's not my opinion. The fact is that that's true, what he's saying. The pie split between the governing bodies in major sports, all major American sports, like NFL, NBA, baseball, NHL, is 50% maybe more, some less, but around 50%. Ours is way lower than that. It is true.

Obviously it's slightly - well, quite different sport because it's international, played globally. We are under different rules and regulations of different countries and legislations, taxes, et cetera, et cetera.

Obviously each tournament is independently governing their own prize money split. Then you have ATP, WTA, then obviously Grand Slams that are separate entities that can do whatever they like.

It's quite fragmented from that point of view. It's not easy to get everybody in the same room and say, Okay, let's agree on a certain percentage.

The revenue share is quite different in Grand Slams and a 250 event, for example, which is quite different than the major American sports where it's all under USA law and legislation. It's different.

You have a player union there. They can obviously under their regulations and laws negotiate the terms. It's quite different with us. Actually was one of the reasons why PTPA was formed, to represent better players' rights and voices, because I don't think that's been done to the level that is satisfactory with ATP and WTA over the years.

I've been president of players council for quite a few

years. I've been in the council almost 10 years. I know exactly how the system works. In the end of the day unfortunately players don't really make a decision on the big - how can I say - topics.

When you look at the system, you'd say you have in the governing body of ATP on the board three player representatives, board representatives, three tournament board representatives, and now you have CEO and president. For most of the years you had the president who had the deciding vote, right?

You would think that whatever players council decides, that the player board representatives would go on the board and vote for that. That hasn't been the case always. We have problem there.

We have a problem in the very - how can I say - structure of the ATP is that as players we only have the 50% of that organization. There's always - not always but a lot of times there was conflict of interest between tournaments and players. We wanted different thing.

We are part of the same system, and we can't go without each other, but we are oftentimes in conflictual situations. We want more money, they maybe don't want to give us as much money when we talk about the prize money. There's so many different layers of the prize money that you have to look into. It's not that simple.

In essence what Nick was talking about is true. If you see it from a kind of general overview of just the pure percentage that players are getting from the revenue share, is way lower than most of the other global sports, American sports particularly.

Q. You mentioned how important it was the first time you're family had been with you Down Under. Can that be a secret weapon behind the scenes to get you playing your best tennis?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, as I mentioned on the court, this is the first time my family comes with me, my children, my wife. I was actually a little bit surprised as well, my wife said she wanted to take the kids on the road and come to Australia. I wasn't expecting that because I know it's a long trip, school and everything. Many challenges that you have to face as a parent.

I'm doing my own thing here. If I have a match day, I'm spending time getting ready for that match and everything. Obviously she has to take care of the kids. She's here supporting me, trying to give me that love and energy, along with kids, that I need to play my best tennis.

So far it's working very well. I mean, I'm feeling great on the court. I'm playing great. It allows me to, first of all, not feel the guilt that I'm so far away for such a long time.

I've been feeling that, I must admit, when I would travel to Australia in the previous years. I would be away for whatever, four, five weeks. Every time you have to separate with your kids and your wife, there's a lot of tears involved. It's not easy. Then you start to question yourself, Why do I have to do it over and over again?

This makes it so much easier for me, obviously knowing going back home now they're going to be there waiting for me. I'm more motivated. I am also more calm, more serene. I spend great quality time with them. It allows me to also not think about tennis 24/7, to have time where I can just release the tension and be really, yeah, involved in their time.

It's a great balance so far. Kids have been enjoying the tennis tournament. They know a few players they like to watch. Yeah, it's been great.

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