

# Adelaide International

Saturday, 6 January 2024

Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

## Thanasi Kokkinakis

Press Conference



**Q. Talk about coming back to Adelaide and how much you've enjoyed playing here.**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, always good memories here. Love coming home. A place I'm super familiar with, first tour title. Just yeah, I've had my best success here and just love playing in front of friends and family. Everything is just so easy here. Can't be happier coming back.

**Q. Can we have a word on word on Jordan Thompson last night?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, hell of an effort. That's probably one of the few times recently I've seen him play obviously start to finish, and yeah, he played incredible. Obviously Rafa is coming back and showed a good level his first two matches.

Hopefully he's healthy, ready enough to go for Aussie Open. I knew he was struggling a little bit in that third set. But hell of an effort from Thommo. Another tough one tonight for him, but yeah, it was a good battle.

**Q. That's eight Aussie men in the top 71 to make it, which is extraordinary. Do you think that's gone under the radar within Australia? Are people aware of the strength of Australian men's tennis at the moment?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, maybe a little bit under the radar to be honest. I know there's so much hype on the Aussie summer, but there's just so much tennis apart from that, so it feels like sometimes if you don't perform in Australia, it's kind of irrelevant for the rest of the year. Not to the actual tennis and sporting fans but to maybe the general public sometimes.

It's incredible depth, obviously led by Demon. When Nick comes back, we'll have another one in there as well, hopefully, so I think it's great what we're doing. Obviously Davis Cup final, as well, last year, so back-to-back years.

I think we've got great depth, singles and doubles, as well, and hopefully we can keep pushing each other.

**Q. If you look back to the greats of the '60s, '70s,**

**Laver, Roche, et cetera, really this is a golden generation of sorts. We're a tiny country here. To have eight players, it just seems -- do you feel it's a special sign for Australian tennis?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, definitely. I think we're all pushing each other, obviously led by Demon, having a great Davis Cup in Lleyton, who instills kind of that work ethic. It's just good.

Hopefully we can keep pushing each other. Hopefully we can get some more younger guys coming up as well. But yeah, I think maybe the guys back in the day had probably better individual success, but as far as depth goes, it's great at the moment.

**Q. You briefly talked about your memories here. You won a title here obviously in 2022. Can you talk a little bit about that run and how special that was.**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, that was crazy. Kind of had -- it was the year I think after the COVID year, tried to -- I was away for nine months straight the year before just playing in all sorts of places. Didn't know what to expect.

Then coming and making a semi sort of the first tournament of the year, and then I was fortunate enough to have back-to-back Adelaide events and I was actually talking about not playing the second one because I was cooked after the first week. I hadn't had that many matches at that level for a long time, and my coaching team was just like, just go, just play the first match and see how you feel.

Ended up getting through it and having my best ever week on tour. Big thanks to them for telling me to play. But it was a crazy experience.

I remember the semifinal against Cilic I was up 6-2 in the tiebreak, then he won maybe five points straight, maybe four or five points straight, and he got up match point, and I was like, oh, no, this could be one of the biggest chokes of all time. But yeah, luckily I pulled it together, and it was probably the most emotional I've been on court. I'll never forget that memory.

**Q. Aussie Open obviously coming up next week; how are you feeling at the moment, and how are the preparations?**

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THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, I was a little bit underdone, sort of got injured a little bit end of last year before Davis Cup, so I wasn't able to play there, so I'm looking at this to try and kind of kick start my year and kind of today -- this week feels like my starting point where I'm going to feel physically and mentally ready to go.

Yeah, going to give everything I have here and hopefully get a few matches and see how we do before Aussie Open.

**Q. How important is it to kick start your summer off here in Adelaide, your home tournament? Had a lot of success recently obviously winning the title in '22. How important is it to get a good couple of matches in and get a bit of form heading into Melbourne?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, I think it's important to have that confidence and that belief, kind of see where your game is at a little bit. It's a super strong field here, a lot of depth. All these guys are coming off a preseason and everyone is super hungry to start the year. There's never any easy matches.

But yeah, hopefully playing in front of friends and family, playing with that extra little chip on my shoulder, that extra bit of energy, and hopefully I can play some of my best tennis, and it's nice kind of knowing and seeing where your level is at a little bit before a Grand Slam next week.

**Q. Do you always pencil in this tournament at the start of the year back home?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, I'm not changing that. I'm very happy we've got a tour event here, especially since the exos we've had in the past, I know they used to be Brisbane and Sydney, and I was blessed the last few years having the double up with the two Adelaide events, but yeah, this is one that I'm never taking off.

**Q. Your opponent, Dusan Lajovic, I think you've played him a couple of times but not for a while. What are you expecting from him?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, I think I played him maybe twice in 2015. It's a long time ago.

No, good player. Very solid on all surfaces. He's a hard worker. He's going to give me nothing easy, but I've got to play my game, play big and play aggressive and play with that energy and see how we go.

Anyone can beat anyone at this level. That's one thing I've noticed. There's maybe upsets on paper, but with individuals sports you never know how someone is feeling day-to-day, so I'm just going to prepare as well as

I can. I've had a couple good training days, and hopefully I play well when it matters.

**Q. You were talking about Dusan; you might go to a festival with him, but plans have changed since?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, I don't know if it's because we drew each other or because the weather is horrendous. He actually messaged me saying, do you have a hookup for Peggy Gou, who's playing here. I didn't even know she was here. I don't know if we'll be going, but he's a good man, so no bitterness there.

**Q. It's a bit different to the Adelaide sunshine you're used to. How are you going to handle this?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Well, it doesn't change too much for me because hopefully I'm playing indoors on that Centre Court, so it's not too different. But it's pretty rare for Adelaide to have this sort of weather. I was in Briszy, and there it's either 40 degrees or it's a tsunami. It's surprising having that here a little bit.

But can't complain; we've got a beautiful Centre Court, so hopefully the rain doesn't come through.

**Q. You talk about breaking that 50 mark. Is that your goal for this year?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, my goal first and foremost is to try and enjoy the sport every week. That's something I honestly struggle with as the year goes. It's a very long year, a lot of travel, and I enjoy my time home. This is definitely one of the more enjoyable weeks for me. But yeah, ranking-wise that's probably the goal, going on from there and just -- I think the more focused and the more I enjoy every week and take it for what it is, I think that'll allow me to play my best tennis and keep my head there mentally.

**Q. How is the body going after Brisbane International into this and also Australian Open coming up?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, I feel good. Had a few training days. Obviously just want to play a few more matches kind of to see where I'm at. Very short preseason I had sort of rehabbing after Davis Cup, and then trying to get ready for the first couple tournaments of the year.

I knew I wasn't going to be at 100 percent the last couple weeks, but now I think I've got no restrictions and I feel great, so I feel good.

**Q. Do you have any pre-match rituals that get you in the right head space to play?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: I try to. If I would, I think I'd be

in a good head space every week, but I'm not, so I've still got to keep working on that. Just a good sleep and some good food, maybe watch a bit of NBA during the day to put me in a good mood, if my team doesn't lose, but if they lose I know it's going to be a rough day on the court for me.

**Q. You talk about being home. I don't imagine you'll get a lot of downtime while you're here, but do you have anything you plan to do while in town, places to go?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Honestly, I have barely spent much time in Adelaide apart from the tournament the last few years or Christmas, so I just went over to my parents' place for some dinner last night. My niece is over there, so I just love seeing her whenever I'm home.

That's pretty much it. I wouldn't even know too many places to go. Actually I'd have to ask some of my schoolmates that still live here where to go for dinner and stuff. But it's tough; the tennis player life is a bit different. It's kind of boring at times. You don't want to go out too many places because you want to save your energy, and if you lose, you want to get to Melbourne to prepare there.

We'll see. We'll see. But definitely just being home with my family and seeing my niece is the coolest thing.

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