

Adelaide International

Monday, 8 January 2024

Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

Jack Draper

Press Conference



J. DRAPER/S. Baez

6-3, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Jack, congratulations on the win. Talk us through the game and the first set as you came out 6-1 with a huge first set.

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, Sebastian is a good player. He makes it hard. He likes to play long rallies. He's obviously one of the top players in the world.

I felt like it's always difficult, the first match of the year, but I trust my practice, and I trust my preseason, the way I've been playing, and I was confident in that. When I came out, I sort of knew what to expect from myself, and I was ready to play well.

Q. Last year with the events that were here, you did pretty well in one of them. Do you think back 12 months when you come and play here again, or what's your feeling?

JACK DRAPER: I think obviously I remember the conditions. I remember Adelaide as a place. But I feel like last year was a bit different. Those two weeks, we were here for a long time, and yeah, I feel like every week is different no matter if you come back to the same place twice.

Me and my coach got here last week, and we've been preparing, and it feels very different this year. I feel like I'm in a much better place with my tennis and with my mindset and physicality.

I think it's good to feel like I've improved a lot in that year.

Q. You say you're in a different mindset and difference in your tennis; what is that specifically?

JACK DRAPER: I think just one year older, just matured a lot. Obviously went through quite a lot of injuries last year, even though I think my ranking was around 38, 40, and currently I'm about 61 in the world.

I had to learn a lot about myself last year, and I dropped outside the top 100. Had to grind myself back. I feel like I'm just a lot stronger mentally and I have a lot more

perspective of being in a good position.

In terms of my tennis, I feel like I'm improving. I'm trying to come forwards more. I'm trying to win the points instead of letting the other players make a mistake or something, which is what I feel like I was trying to do last year. I feel like both things I've improved.

Q. You played an aggressive style; you touched on it there. You did rush the net. You attacked him, and you didn't face a breakpoint. Was that one of the more pleasing aspects of today, as well?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, definitely. I didn't actually serve too well today. Like first set I didn't make many first serves.

But yeah, definitely in terms of overall game, me and my coach have been trying to really use my weapons and the way I play to be more aggressive. I think the way that tennis is going, everyone is hitting the ball hard and being aggressive, obviously consistent, as well, and defend when you need to. But if you get that ball to attack, then try and take it on.

So I'm definitely trying to earn those things a bit more.

Q. You mentioned the injuries last year, but you finished strongly. You made the finals of the indoor tournament in Bulgaria; how much confidence did that give you coming into the new year?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, definitely. I was in a good position, and then there was a stage come grass where it just seemed like it was all going wrong, lots of injuries and stuff.

After that sort of period of being out from the French Open until after Wimbledon, kind of changed quite a lot of things. Tried to really work hard on my body, and also being out, it's tough seeing other players do well and all these sort of things.

I came back really motivated and had a good US Open, and then that gave me a lot of confidence going into the end of the year with Davis Cup and Sofia. I think I won a Challenger, as well. I think I've been building a lot of good practices and a lot of matches at the end of last year, so I feel confident coming into this year.

Q. In terms of like off season, after that, where were you based? How is your body now? Looks pretty good.

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, it went really well. Obviously the calendar finished for us in Málaga for Davis Cup, so I didn't have a lot of time. Had a week off and then went straight into training in the UK. I think I was in the UK about four or five weeks. Obviously a few of those days was the UTS event in London, which was great to play a few matches against top players, and I kind of was training through that, as well.

Had a really good five weeks, a lot of good practices, really worked hard physically, and just tried to do all the right things for the coming year.

Q. Next week obviously Aussie Open. You played Rafa there last year. What are your thoughts about heading back there this year and aims for the Open?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, I don't remember much from last year, to be honest. I played the semifinal here, then I think I caught a flight, and then I was playing the next day and then I lost and I was out that night. It was kind of a weird feeling. It felt like it went very quickly. I don't remember much about playing Rafa or anything like that. It all felt a bit of a blur.

Depending on how this week goes, I'm really excited to go back to Australia, and I feel like, again, I'm in a better position to hopefully do well in the tournament. I feel confident that I can do well there.

Q. Going back to the O2 exhibition, does that get channelled back into your career? Also, do you feel you benefit out of any of those matches, even if they don't count to anything?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, in terms of the money, obviously I did get a lot of money from the event, and yeah, that money will go straight into trying to be a better player, investing in my tennis. I'm not a very kind of materialistic guy, so none of that's going towards anything else apart from getting better on the tennis side of things. Tennis is a very expensive sport, so every little bit helps.

In terms of that event, yeah, it's obviously a bit crazy. The music going on, there's different rules, there's bonus cards of three points, and it's really difficult, but in terms of actual preseason training and physicality, it was tough. We played four quarters of eight minutes. You had to be ready to return within five seconds. So even if you played a 30-shot rally, you had to almost kind of run to return.

It was tough, and obviously you're not playing just random players. You're playing the best players in the world. There was a lot of stress on the line, as well.

It was good, as well, because there was a lot of money on the line and everyone wanted to win, and it made it really competitive. I think I got a lot of confidence from playing those guys. I played Rune twice; he's a top 10 player. Obviously the likes of Bublik, Monfils, Ruud. It was really good for me.

Q. Obviously you don't know who it is, Kecmanovic or Mackie McDonald. What are your thoughts going in against them?

JACK DRAPER: I don't know too much about Mackenzie McDonald. Obviously seen him play and stuff. He's a really good player.

Then Kecmanovic, I think we're one-to-one head-to-head. I played him recently at Málaga, and I feel like he played a near to perfect match against me, so I know he's a great player. But I think with the way I'm playing and in these conditions, there's no reason I can't do well in that match, so I look forward to whoever it is.

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