

# Australian Open

Thursday, 11 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Alexei Popyrn

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: First Grand Slam of the year. How are you feeling heading into your first round?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Very excited. I think I've been playing good tennis. Had two really good matches in Brisbane. Pretty solid pre-season.

Really excited to put on a show for the Aussie crowd. Hopefully I can replicate a few matches like last year.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

### Q. You pulled out of Adelaide. How is the body?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah, it's good. Today was my first day back on court since. Yeah, the glut feels as good as normal. So, yeah, we're going to up the intensity the next couple days, then we'll be ready for the start of the tournament, for sure.

### Q. Have you seen the draw?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah, seen the draw.

### Q. Obviously Marc first. Talk us through that matchup.

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah, Markie is a really tough player to player. Last time I played him was at a challenger in California. We had a battle there. I think I came out on top in that one.

Yeah, it's going to be tough. He's a really good player. We came up junior ranks. I know him. He's a good friend. It's also tough to play a good friend and an Aussie. We've got so many Aussies now in the draw, at least some of us are bound to play each other. It happened in Brisbane also against O'Connell. It's happened again against Markie.

### Q. Beyond that, if you face Novak Djokovic, Rod Laver Arena, what do you think that would be like?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: I'm just taking it one match at a time.

If you want me to think ahead, look, it's going to be great. For now, I'm just focused on playing Markie, getting through that match, then you can ask me that after that match. It's a pretty daunting prospect.

Not looking for that when the draw comes. You just focus on your match, like I said. You focus on your first round. If it comes... He's got to win his first round, too.

No, look, you just focus on your match. Once you get past that first match, then you can start thinking about it. You don't think too much about it, yeah.

### Q. Did you spend some time with him as a hitting partner a couple years ago?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: I hit with him not as a hitting partner, no. I didn't hit with him at all. I hit with him a couple times at Aussie Open. I think it was 2019 or something like that. But I was already playing. I made third round that year.

We practiced a few times then. I've practiced with him a few times after that. I know what to expect. Played him. Watched a lot of him.

### Q. What does the Australian Open do for you? Your best Grand Slam results in Melbourne. Does that lift you? Some people crumble playing at home.

ALEXEI POPYRIN: No, it lifts me, for sure. The Aussie crowd, the home crowd, is something special. Last year showed it against Fritz. It was unbelievable. Also in the first round, half the stadium was gone, but half the stadium was packed. They were there till 3 a.m. supporting me. That's something you don't get anywhere else.

Without them, I wouldn't have been able to get through the first round and definitely not through the second round. They definitely lift me.

I don't feel the extra pressure to come out there and perform in front of them. If anything, they help me more than anything.

I'm looking forward to it. It's going to be great fun. It's the time of the year that I look forward to the most, honestly, because us Aussies, we don't get that kind of support anywhere else in the world. We've got it one month a year, three tournaments a year. We take the most of it.



**Q. You touched on the Fritz match. Djokovic is a whole 'nother level. You've beaten that caliber of player in Melbourne. Does that give you the confidence that you can compete with all these top guys out here?**

ALEXEI POPYRIN: I've always had that kind of confidence that I've got a level to cause trouble to a lot of the top guys. Yeah, it's going to be an interesting match if I get there.

Honestly, not thinking to that match. Got to get past that Markie match, then we'll see.

**Q. There's now a courtside bar at Court 6. It's probably going to be a lot more rowdy. Would you enjoy playing in an atmosphere like that, where you go from the dead silence of every game you played to possibly a rowdy atmosphere?**

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah, definitely. But I don't think it will get much more rowdy than last year in John Cain for me. That last year was so rowdy, so loud. Even against Shelton, the match that I lost, it was unbelievable. Definitely Court 6, it's a small stadium, it's outdoors.

No, definitely, whenever you get fans on the sidelines, it's always rowdy in Australia here when you're playing.

**Q. Do you think you'll speak to Marc before the match or is this radio silence?**

ALEXEI POPYRIN: No, we'll crack a few jokes when we see each other. It's not radio silence. Used to playing each other, us Aussies. We get along. When match day comes we're enemies, but after that we're friends again.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports