

Australian Open

Saturday, 13 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll go straight into questions for Novak.

Q. Who do you consider your biggest threat in this tournament?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Myself always first, and then of course all the other best players in the world. Any player is here with, I'm sure, intention to achieve the dream of winning a Grand Slam. Some players are obviously more expected to go further than some others. It's 128 draw. It's a Grand Slam. We know what Grand Slam represents for our sport. It's where every player wants to play their best tennis.

Yeah, it's exciting to be a part of another slam.

Q. Can I get your thoughts on the schedule change of the Australian Open this year, 15 days, Sunday start. Do you think it will help prevent late-finishing matches?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It could. I guess that's one of the motives behind starting on Sunday. Obviously there are other slams that start on Sunday. I think Roland Garros is starting on Sunday, as well. That's going to help, I'm sure, get some matches out of the way, reorganize the schedule better in the opening week, which is always very busy with a lot of matches on the schedule that need to be finished in a proper time.

Let's see if that works out.

Q. You've been here so many times, won so many times. Do you have certain routines you do here now? Do you stay in the same house? Eat the same meals? Can you share some of those with us of what you do when you're here.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I'm not superstitious. I do obviously like to visit certain places that have brought me luck and make me feel good. For example, botanical gardens just nearby, it's a wonderful park where I like to spend time and just be by myself in nature, just grounding, hugging trees, climbing trees and stuff. I love to do that. So I've done that for, yeah, last 15 years.

Whether that's secret of success here in Australia or not,

I don't know, but it has definitely made me feel good (smiling).

I like to obviously have a walk by the beach or jog if I can do that. I've been staying in different places. Mostly South Yarra. I like that more than the city because it's a bit more quiet.

Obviously during the Grand Slams you have lots of challenges, mental, physical, emotional. There's a lot of activities happening even on the days when you don't have matches. It's good to have places where you can just rewind, relax, rejuvenate and kind of gather all the necessary energy for the next day.

I like to isolate a bit more. In a place like New York, for example, I stay in New Jersey. I stay with my friend where I'm in complete nature, isolation. It just allows me to relax and recharge. I like that kind of balance because Grand Slams are completely different kind of energy, vibe tournaments than any other event that we have on the tour.

Q. It's nice to see you at the top of the game. Kei Nishikori is injured again and out of the tournament. It's been 10 years since he beat you in the US Open final. Since then you have been beating him 17 times in a row. Are you looking forward to his comeback?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I sincerely hope that he can be injury-free in the near future and that we can see more of Kei on the tour. He has been one of the most successful tennis players in the last decade. He's been established top-5, top-10 player, playing regularly in the World Tour Finals.

He's had fantastic career, no doubt about it. I'm sure that he still wants to do more. But injuries have been really probably his biggest adversary in his career. I hope that he'll come back.

We had some thrilling matches, great matches. We played many times in the final stages of Grand Slams. Here a couple times. US Open as you mentioned. Yes, he did beat me in the semis of US Open the year that he played finals. I think it was 2014, so 10 years ago exactly. Time flies (smiling).

But he's very important player for our sport, coming from



Japan, coming from Asia. He's the first I think Asian player that broke to top 10, top 5 in the world.

I really hope he's going to be back. We all admire his game. He's a great player to watch. I admire his skills, his footwork. His backhand is one of the best ever, really, that I've seen and I have played with. Hopefully he's going to be back soon.

Q. How is your wrist? Alex de Minaur, how much better do you think he can get as a player?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: My wrist is good. I had time from the last match against de Minaur in the United Cup to my first match here to recover. I've been training well. Practice sessions pain-free so far. It's good. It's all looking good. Let's see how it goes.

De Minaur played great in United Cup. He beat Fritz, myself, Zverev. He broke into the top 10 for the first time in his career. It's obviously a big deal for him, for Australian tennis.

It didn't come as a surprise to me. I mean, I know that he's capable of doing big things. He's one of the quickest, if not the quickest, tennis player we have in the game. He's got all-around tennis game. He can play equally well defense and offense. He's improving. Obviously Lleyton Hewitt by his side as a mentor, who has had a pretty similar style of tennis, I must say. It helps a lot to guide him also mentally in this process of competing at the highest level.

I know that the expectations are high from him as they normally are from Kyrgios or any other top Australian player when they play at home.

There is a great chance that he can do very well and go deep in the tournament. Obviously you never know. You can't predict the results. But he's in great shape.

Q. Have your desire for a Golden Slam this year become much more stronger since the moment you arrived in Melbourne?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, look, it's no secret that I verbalize my goals and I say clearly that I want to win every slam that I participate and play on. It's no different this year.

I'm just hoping I can start the season in a way that I have been starting my seasons, most of my seasons, throughout my career: with a win here in Australia, in Melbourne. My favorite place, no doubt. The court where I've done great things and achieved my greatest Grand Slam results.

I hope that, yeah, I'm going to be able to, if not play at the level that I did last year, then be very close to that,

because that was one of the best tennis levels that I've played, ever played, here in Australia last year.

Let's see how it goes. I mean, the season is so long. We have an Olympic year. Grand Slams, Olympics, those are the big goals. I have to see how it goes here and think about everything else when it comes around the corner.

Q. A lot of players and other people have marveled at how you've managed injuries in the past. How does this wrist injury compare with what you've dealt with in Australia before in other tournaments?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It's not as bad as some other injuries I had here. 2021 and last year I had worse injuries that I had to deal with. So, yeah, I mean, I can't predict whether it's going to come back. Once I start playing more matches, stress levels go higher. I don't know. We have to find out.

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