

# Australian Open

Monday, 15 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/D. Prizmic

6-2, 6-7, 6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

**Q. You sounded a little bit under the weather earlier in the week. I don't know if you're still feeling the effects, when you say you're still physically searching for yourself...**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: That's what I was referring to. Maybe I didn't express myself.

Yeah, I am a bit under the weather last, yeah, four, five days. You can probably judge by my voice. Look, it is what it is. You just have to try to deal with it and get over it and accept the circumstances and try to make the most of it.

I mean, I had an amazing opponent tonight. For an 18-year-old, he played so maturely and confidently on the court, fighting through, not giving up even when he was four down in the fourth set. Impressed with his mentality, with his approach, with his game. I hear a lot of positive stories about his discipline, his dedication to everyday routines that are making him so physically strong already at 18 and successful.

Yeah, if he continues this way, he's going to have a very bright career ahead of him, no doubt.

**Q. When you're in a match like that that gets complicated, how much confidence do you draw from your record at this event?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I mean, I think it's probably more helpful at the beginning. As was the case today, he made some double-faults in the first game. I broke his serve. You could see he was nervous. I think it helps at the beginning really to kind of make your presence even bigger on the court.

When they're calling out the achievements and the scores and everything that you basically achieved on this tournament, I think it's impossible for players not to hear that, not to feel that, especially for a young player like him.

I played one loose game in the second set. Handed him the break. I rebroke, but I could feel he's starting to feel more comfortable, he's not missing as much. There were some grueling rallies, very physical game. Almost four hours for four sets. It felt at some point I was playing myself in a mirror already.

I hear that he liked to watch me when he was growing up. I mean, he's got an incredible defense, especially from the backhand side. Very all-around game. Of course, he's got every shot in the game to improve. For an 18-year-old, I think I'm most impressed with his physical state. His legs are so super strong and so solid.

Also the mentality. He came out there not with a desire to just play a nice set or enjoy the experience, but rather to win. Kudos to him. It was impressive.

I don't think that the achievements here really wins a match, but it does help at the beginning to maybe get off to a good start, which was the case. Again, it didn't win the match for me tonight.

**Q. Given that you have a little extra recovery time and you are not feeling your best, how do you sort of plan the next two days?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I will discuss with my team tomorrow, see if I maybe skip practice tomorrow, tennis practice. Maybe do some light work, gym, jog, some specific exercises just to keep my body in shape.

I mean, last year I haven't practiced in between any match really. It was different circumstances because I was injured. I think now with two days, it's quite useful after playing four-hour opening round.

Let's see how I wake up tomorrow and then we'll play it by ear.

**Q. They're trying out a new policy of letting people from the crowd into the stadium. I think I heard you make some comments about that. What are your thoughts?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I did not know about that new policy or new rule.

Look, I mean, I understand the motive behind it is to enhance and improve the experience for fans, right? We do play for fans. We want fans to have a great, thrilling experience of being out on the court.

Like Tiafoe, for example, is one of the players that was saying we should let people, like in other sports, freely walk and talk during matches. It's hard, I must say. I understand that and I support it to some extent, but at the same time all my career, all my life I've been used to some kind of atmosphere. When that changes, it kind of messes up, distracts you a bit.

Today we lost quite a bit of time when they were letting people in to come to their seats, even though it was not a changeover. My opponent would wait for them to sit down. It dragged a lot.

I don't know if it's really the best rule, but I do understand from a tournament and fan perspective it's probably better because they don't want to wait. They want to come out and enjoy every single point.

I'm kind of divided between the two in a way.

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