

Australian Open

Monday, 15 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Alex de Minaur

Press Conference



A. de MINAUR/M. Raonic

6-7, 6-3, 2-0 (ret.)

THE MODERATOR: Alex, I'm sure not the way you wanted to finish the match. Did you notice anything wrong in Milos?

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, look, it's definitely not the way you want to go through to the next round. Not in the first set. I started maybe midway through the second to notice a little bit him losing a bit of speed on his serve, eventually making it a little bit easier for me to kind of expose his movement, get back into the rallies.

I wish him a speedy recovery.

THE MODERATOR: Any questions?

Q. What did you learn about yourself tonight out of that match? What are you going to take out of it?

ALEX de MINAUR: Look, that no matter what the situation is, I'm going to stay calm and collected. I know five-set matches are a very long way to go. Doesn't matter what position you're in, stay calm and collected. I'll believe in myself to change the situation, any situation.

Q. Any nerves?

ALEX de MINAUR: No. I think there's no real nerves for playing this sort of match or playing in Australia or playing on RLA. I think the nerves come from playing an opponent like Milos because it's so unpredictable, so tough to play him. You've got no rhythm. Ultimately it feels like a lottery. You get to a tiebreak, and you feel like every single point is so important. That's what creates probably the nerves and the tightness.

I do believe I lost that first set due to that. Just got tight in the big moments. But it is what it is. It's a five-set match. I told myself to recoup and start again for the second.

Q. Being the No. 1 Australian at this tournament, is that a blessing or a negative for you?

ALEX de MINAUR: Well, I've been in this situation for a

couple years now. Probably the only thing that has changed is now that I am at the ranking that I am, there's a little bit more hype around me.

But saying that, I haven't changed the slightest. For me, I still enjoy every moment I'm here. It's a blessing starting the year in Australia, playing in front of my home fans.

I don't really associate playing in Australia as nerve-wracking or more pressure. In fact, I associate it as just excitement. I walk out and I've got an unbelievable crowd behind me, so I'm very fortunate for that.

Q. Looking into the year, where does the Olympics rate for you, if at all?

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, it's definitely a priority. I mean, ultimately I missed last Olympics, and I was shattered, due to a positive COVID test. Yeah, it was a priority back then, and it will be a priority this year again.

It is in a tough moment of the year scheduling-wise, right? You're just finishing the grass season. Normally you would go - at least I would - onto the hard court swing. You have to stick on clay for a little bit longer. Kind of changes a couple things here and there scheduling-wise, but it is still a priority. It's still the Olympics. It's still another chance for me to represent the green and gold and hopefully become an Olympian.

Q. Would you consider doubles?

ALEX de MINAUR: I would love to play doubles. I would love to play any and as many events as possible. I'll do my best to play a lot of doubles leading in, and hopefully I get someone that wants to play with me (smiling).

Q. At the Olympics?

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, yeah, for sure.

Q. In terms of your draw, it's opened up massively. If things go as they should, it's a seed-free path for you through to the second week. What does that do for you confidence-wise knowing it's not copping some really big names early days?



ALEX de MINAUR: To be completely fact, I have no idea about my draw. I don't look at the draw. I don't like it. I think it's a way of getting ahead of yourself. There's no moment like the present.

For me the only thing I'm really focused about is just my next-round opponent, which is obviously Arnaldi, who is a quality Italian player with a lot of firepower. He started the year really well. I'm going to be ready for that battle. Whatever happens happens after that.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, look, the great thing about it is I'll definitely get a little bit more rhythm. I'll feel a little bit more confident on the court and I'll feel like I have a little bit more time, especially on return.

Q. You mentioned Davis Cup and the Davis Cup Final result on the court. Does that genuinely motivate you going into a match like this? Do you look for things like that to get that 1% edge?

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, I mean, it's no secret Davis Cup is a huge priority for me. It's been shattering the last couple of years just to get so close to the Holy Grail and just barely miss out.

Yeah, I mean, I do associate Matteo as the guy that beat us in the Davis Cup Final. I'll do my best to hopefully get some revenge. He's a quality opponent. I'll be ready for it hopefully.

Q. When you step out on RLA, you've obviously played there quite a few times, but it feels like this year there's more expectation on you. Do you feel more confident as a player every time you step out there? What do you learn about yourself when you stand on that stage?

ALEX de MINAUR: It is pretty amazing, honestly. Just growing up over the years, the experiences of me playing on RLA, I think I said last year that it felt pretty special to play on RLA on my own terms, like saying I'm the one being scheduled on RLA, not because I'm playing Rafa or someone like that (smiling). That was a surreal experience.

Honestly, to come into the Australian Open and get, I guess, the primetime slot on RLA, it's a pretty cool experience. To see the crowd there all supporting me from the very first ball until the last, it does give me a lot of belief. It gives me a lot of confidence. It kind of shows that all the hard work I've been putting, it's reaping its rewards.

Q. Your climb up the rankings, do you attribute that to any physical or mental improvements?

ALEX de MINAUR: There's obviously been a lot of tweaks here and there. That's no secret. That's been the same my whole career.

I do believe it's been a big mental kind of side of things where I've kind of told myself that I've got to show all the variety I've got, all the different shots I can create, the game styles I can play, ultimately be aggressive, right?

I knew in the past that maybe being a defender/counter-puncher wasn't going to beat the top guys in the world. I had to improve in that aspect and develop a more aggressive playing style.

I think that's what's been getting me the wins against the top players. Obviously gives me a lot of confidence knowing that I can do this in the bigger stages, and I can take it to the top players in the world.

Q. Can I get you to talk about Adolfo, the impact he's had on your life. We always hear about Lleyton Hewitt. He's the man that's been with you since you were a kid. What makes him such a special person to you?

ALEX de MINAUR: Look, Adolfo, he's been like my second father, like a father figure. I've been with him, we've been together now for 16 years, right? He took me in as a young kid to the point where my family would obviously struggle to pay him at times, right? He took me in. He would do countless hours with me.

It just means the world, again, that we've been able to accomplish all this together. We've gone from me being a little brat at eight years old, nine years old, to playing juniors, to playing futures, staying in hostels, motels all around Europe, to challengers, 250s, to now making it to 10 in the world. I mean, it's pretty surreal.

I could have never done it without him. I think he deserves all the credit in the world. He doesn't like the spotlight, but he deserves it all. I do owe it all to him.

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