

Australian Open

Tuesday, 16 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Max Purcell

Press Conference



M. PURCELL/M. Valkusz

3-6, 7-6, 6-4, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Max, congratulations. Four tight sets to get through to the next round of your home Grand Slam, must be pretty pleased right now.

MAX PURCELL: Yeah, was a part there I didn't think I'd be off court for a long time there. Almost gagging that fourth set three times.

But, yeah, stoked to have closed it out there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Take us through the fourth set when you were serving at 5-4. He broke back. How did you regroup and get your composure back?

MAX PURCELL: I was 5-2 serving, as well. 5-2 serving, 5-3 returning, 5-4 serving. I guess I feel like if I stay calm enough after getting broken, I feel like I always get rewarded with another break back.

Obviously it was disappointing to not hold there, then have to be two games away again from winning. I was like, All right, it is what it is. Just be calm and you'll get rewarded. And I did. He played a shocking game to give me the break again and I then got to serve with new balls.

Q. Does it get frustrating when you have six match points, more and more frustrating as the game went on?

MAX PURCELL: Yeah, a little bit because every time -- besides the first one, which was a bloody close serve to finishing it, it was always deuce/ad. So every time I lost the match point I was always two points away again.

That particular ball change felt like the balls got a lot older than every other ball change throughout the match. I feel like these balls, I hadn't served with balls that used. He was kind of against the breeze. He wasn't moving great. He was having a swing, I guess nothing to lose. Every point felt like it was an absolute battle to win. I was missing first serves just. Again, points with second

serves, was really swirly. He had nothing to lose. All the pressure was on me.

It was definitely frustrating. Again, I regrouped, managed to get through.

Q. First singles win in the AO, you must be pretty pumped about that.

MAX PURCELL: Absolutely. Now I get to take on Casper, which will be cool. We're 1-1 I think in head-to-head. I got the last one. Hopefully it's lively and bouncy like Cincinnati and I can just do some damage like I did against him there.

Q. It was quite an ordeal getting to Cincinnati.

MAX PURCELL: Yeah, it was. Maybe I need tomorrow night to screw up or something to make it really hard for me. A bit of toughness in me before the match so I can go out there and beat him (smiling).

But I don't know, I thought the conditions really suited me in Cincinnati, more so than him, with my serve, and I was coming into the net a lot. It can be hot and fast here. The balls are a little bit heavier. I don't see why it can't work again.

Q. Last year was a breakthrough singles year for you. What was behind the improvement?

MAX PURCELL: First six months of the year when I was working with Dayne Kelly was really impressive. He was really on me with everything professional. He did a really good job. I just thought we gelled really well together.

I really put the emphasis on giving everything I had into singles. So that kind of kick-started me into the confidence that I have now on the singles court.

Q. When you hear John Newcombe say you could push for top 20 perhaps this year, how does that make you feel?

MAX PURCELL: Yeah, huge. I've had a lot of these ex-players give me some belief in my game, they like the way I play in trying to come forward. Obviously today less than usual just 'cause I knew the guy I was playing, his legs were dead from qualifying.

But, yeah, it's great to kind of have their backing. Obviously I have my own team's backing, my own colleagues, friends who back me, as well. We have such a tight group in Australia right now. I back the shit out of Rinky and all these other guys that go out and play. I think we have such a good support group. That helps me believe I can win, as well.

Q. A bit of a buzz in the stadium today.

MAX PURCELL: Absolutely.

Q. You had a chat with the umpire. Was that related to the crowd?

MAX PURCELL: No, a ball kid just took a drink bottle and started walking off the court during the point next to the net.

Q. And more people coming down the stairs...

MAX PURCELL: That's fine. I didn't think it was an issue. The only thing that was annoying me was the security guards at the entrance wearing floral yellow. People were throwing up balls on serve. I'm like, What the fuck are you doing? I can't see the ball. Any other color, please.

As far as the people, it was fine.

Q. He really came out all guns blazing in the first set.

MAX PURCELL: Didn't he?

Q. How did you feel you needed to adjust in that second set? You tightened up your serve.

MAX PURCELL: I don't think I did anything different. I think he just started playing worse. To be honest, I was hoping that would happen. If he kept that level, I would have walked off court, no sets for me, 3-0 to him. Too good. That's tennis.

I'm like, he's ranked where he is for a reason, and I'm ranked where I am for a reason. I'm like, he's going to crack at some point. I'm just going to stay like this. Then hopefully that gets the job done.

Q. Do you think that was more of a stamina thing, being really fit?

MAX PURCELL: Yeah, sure. I mean, I didn't know how long it was going to take for him to start cracking. I could see him looking for the ice towels. But like the hour mark of that match, I was like, All right. If I can get one of these first two sets, then he's still two sets away from winning, I should be home here. I was just grabbing to that thought the whole time. I'm like, the longer this

goes, the better it is for me. It doesn't matter if he's winning or if I'm winning. The longer it goes, the better. I was always fine.

Q. Playing in the heat of the day, how much are you feeding off the crowd here? Do you want to play in a John Cain Arena or a Rod Laver Arena? Are you going to put something in with tournament director Craig Tiley?

MAX PURCELL: I'll play on whichever court they want to play me on. I just wanted to play middle of the day. Anytime you get to play Europeans in the Australia summer when they come from indoor and winter, it's a huge plus. The bigger the courts, the more Australian fans I get cheering me on. If I'm feeling fit and I'm up for the challenge and the heat, why not take a big court in the middle of the day?

Q. What's the atmosphere on court level at the Kia Arena?

MAX PURCELL: When you start firing them up, it gets real loud in there. I thought at the right times I was using the crowd as well to make the guy I was playing feel a little smaller, a little defeated.

But, yeah, they really get behind you, so it's quite nice.

Q. Had a few coffees in Melbourne. What do you think of the Melbourne coffee scene so far?

MAX PURCELL: I'm trying to save the best for later in the tournament. I have had my mate Mark from Breakfast Shirts come down now so we can go see some better cafes and hopefully review some better coffees.

But they have been solid. I finished them all. So that's all that matters. New Zealand was shocking.

Q. How would you rate your game if it was a coffee today?

MAX PURCELL: Probably middle of the road, exactly like Melbourne has been so far. It's fine. I got the job done, but it wasn't pretty.

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