

Australian Open

Tuesday, 16 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Jack Draper

Press Conference



J. DRAPER/M. Giron

6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 6-0, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: First of all, congratulations, Jack. First five-set win, you must be tired and also happy to get through this battle. How do you feel about your performance today?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, obviously very happy. First five-set win. It wasn't easy sort of getting here yesterday, not having much preparation almost. Obviously conditions very different. Balls flying a lot. Much quicker courts than last week.

But to come through that match, obviously proud. The tennis wasn't the best, but I'm just glad I lived to fight another day, I suppose.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Was that the most satisfying moment of your career?

JACK DRAPER: I don't usually get sick, not ever. I think it's weird. It was obviously a physical match. It's tough conditions. It wasn't that long for a five-set match. I played three hours, 40 last week in hotter conditions, and I was physically absolutely fine.

I think it's obviously a Grand Slam. It's tougher sort of with the tension to play that first match. I was obviously unsure of the way I would be playing because different conditions. I think I'm still a young player, so getting used to the environment around these slams and the tension is difficult.

I think it was more kind of psychological stress today that was causing my sort of fatigue rather than the physical nature because I felt better in the fifth set than I did the first.

Q. Given that and the physical issues you've had over the last few years, is it one of the most satisfying matches of your career so far?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, definitely. I've kind of felt like last year, there was a lot of matches where I felt like I

was sort of not getting physically any better. As time went on, it just wasn't coming.

I felt like so far this year, I'm obviously nowhere near where I want to be still, but it's coming. For sure I would have cramped in these matches last year, even maybe four months ago.

There is a lot of positives. I have to be honest with myself and say that I am improving on that side of things. Obviously that, along with the mental side still needs to get a lot better, but I'm obviously proud of the progress I'm making, and I'm putting in the work.

Q. How were you feeling with the medical time-outs? You had your blood pressure taken. Were you feeling sick then?

JACK DRAPER: Not really. That's the thing. When you are very stressed, especially in hot conditions, and you are playing a guy as well, you can be sort of too focused on yourself whereas you are playing him as well.

I just felt like my chest was very tight. It was referring to my back, and I just felt I couldn't really hold myself up. I think, yeah, that's what stress does to you.

I think it will help a lot coming through this match. I feel like maybe in a couple of days it would be very different because I'm a bit more relaxed now maybe.

Q. Was it a puke of sheer relief at the end then, was it?

JACK DRAPER: It was weird. I obviously played such a long point, maybe it was sort of a reaction to finally getting over the line. I don't know. I kind of felt bad because I obviously just beat the guy, and I was saying, I need to shake your hand, mate, but I need to get to that bin (laughter).

Yeah, as I said, I don't really do that often, but it was a reaction.

Q. Do you feel like this was a match you almost needed for your career to prove certain things to yourself because you've obviously been in several slams no, but you never have been as tested to your limit as this one probably?



JACK DRAPER: Yeah, it's a weird one. Obviously last week was the first-ever match I sort of came through. We played a really high-level match. Three hours, 40. Longer than today. Wasn't on my hands and knees once in that match. I felt great all the way through.

Obviously the slams is a bit different. It feels like there's a bit more pressure on it. It feels like you want to do well more.

I mean, there's no doubting I'm really proud to come through this match, and I think it is really important for me. But there's still some underlying stuff that obviously I need to work on, whether that be psychologically starting these slams or just the way I'm handling the anxiety and the nerves because I obviously don't want to play a match like that where I feel like I'm on my hands and knees a lot, and I'm struggling to breathe and calm myself down. That's not a positive.

But it is a big positive that physically I was able to come through the match, not cramp. As the match went on, I got better and better.

Q. Jack, at the end, after the puking, it seemed like your ab was in spasm or something. Never seen that happen before.

JACK DRAPER: That's cramp. You can get it all over your body. But obviously when I did throw up, I was tensing my ab, and that was... I don't know if you saw a photo of it, but I saw a photo of it, and it just looks like it's just hard as a rock, like it just doesn't want to move. It's very painful, yeah.

Yeah, it was cramping, spasming.

Q. Can you just tell us a bit about maybe what you have done over the last hour or so and what the rest of the night and tomorrow looks like in terms of recovery because I manage it's a big job to do.

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, about probably what you are putting into your body. Need to get a lot of fluids inside of me and eat well. I'm going to try and sleep a lot. It's tough to sort of come to a new place. Obviously you're thinking your first-round match a lot. So probably haven't slept the best the last couple of nights. Try and get an early night.

I think it's easy at the slams as well watching tennis the whole time and looking at your phone a lot and people messaging you. It seems like most people, they just follow the slams, you know. So it is kind of difficult to switch off.

I feel like that's obviously where these players who have played 50-odd slams, it's like clockwork. But I'm still

trying to learn all these things. I think now just trying to shut off, maybe hit a few balls tomorrow to keep trying to find my game.

Yeah, try to look forward to playing Tommy on - I don't even know what day it is - Thursday.

Q. You've obviously played Tommy before very recently. How much does that help maybe having had that win over him just a few days ago?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, big-time. He's obviously a great player. First tournament of the year, maybe guys aren't quite finding their game yet. The match I played against him, I was really solid. I played great tennis. But obviously five sets is different.

It seems like he does well in the slams pretty regularly. He's always in the fourth round or I think made semis here last year. It seems like he won fairly convincingly today against a good player as well. He's obviously playing well and likes the conditions.

I think it definitely does help, though, having played him twice and obviously won twice. If that was sort of me, then I would be a bit more fearful.

But it will be a tough match, and he'll be wanting to get some revenge on me for sure.

Q. Can you just describe when you're sort of overcome mentally by anxiety or whatever on the court how it actually feels on the court?

JACK DRAPER: For me, I've never really felt like a lot of tension in my tennis. That's not the issue. It's like when you do have that anxiety when you are playing, obviously there's a lot going on. It's hot. There's sort of no way out from the court. You have to really suffer to win the points, and you've got to work hard.

Every player feels it, and every player has different kind of ways they struggle with it, whether it's someone getting really tight on their forehand, and they can't hit a forehand. It might be their movement starts to go a little bit.

For me, it feels like my breathing starts to really struggle, and I can't get the oxygen in me. That's obviously a difficult point when you are playing. You are not only playing the guy, you are almost competing against yourself because you're not obviously feeling 100%.

That's something I'm going to have to speak to someone about and try and sort of figure out methods in those situations - because it will happen again for sure - to try to calm me down.

I'm hoping that as I keep getting more and more

experiences and I'm playing at this high level in big-pressure environments that it's going to get better.

Q. Have you had it before similarly like that?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, a few times. Always first round you feel a little bit more out of breath. It's obviously because of the tension. I think that's most players. I think I had it in Miami when I collapsed a few years ago.

Obviously that shows the improvement that I'm able to kind of take more suffering and deal with it. But yeah, you just feel like you kind of want to shut down almost. You don't want to move. You don't want to play long points. You are just so focused on sort of surviving through the rallies.

I would say four sets of tennis today I wasn't really thinking about tennis. I was just trying to calm myself down and trying to focus on shortening the points. My coach was telling me, Shorten the points. It's just an area that I'm continuing to work on.

I always felt like the physical issues, like a lot of that has been for me mental as well, sort of dealing with stress, dealing with my emotions. Obviously as I'm getting physically better, I can maybe cope with it a little bit better, but it's definitely an area that is really important as well.

Q. How much, if any, work have you done on that kind of thing with sports psychologists or psychologists, and do you like it?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, I think it's really good to talk to people about that. Obviously we're out there on our own. Every player, like I said, deals with that kind of stress and different things in their own way.

Obviously, if you look at Djokovic, he is probably someone who sort of deals with it incredibly well. Not that he doesn't maybe feel the same stuff that lesser players do, but he just handles it very well because he's been in that situation so many times.

I feel like maybe at the start of your career, you've not really been there before. Like today, this will massively help me because I know that I can come through it. It might not be pretty, but I've sort of done it. Now I've done it once, now I've come through that long sort of battle, and it definitely helps mentally.

I think at this level the difference between being maybe a top-10 player and a top-100 player is just purely mental and physical. Everyone hits the ball great. Everyone plays well. It's just about how consistent and how mentally you deal with situations, you deal with your emotions. Obviously physicality as well is massive.

That whole mental side, that's huge. It's an area that I've definitely improved on, but it's something that I'm going to have to keep on working on.

Q. At the end of the third set, what were you telling yourself? Did you feel like you had it in you to win that match?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, I think after the third set I went off, had my sort of break. You have a five-minute break. And I kind of tried to sort of slow my breathing down. Then kind of when I felt like I was calm, kind of had a go at myself. Maybe less calm after that.

No, I think you can get so wrapped up when you are playing, it's point by point, and you feel like you're almost not there, whereas it helps having that break to feel like you get more present and you are kind of thinking more clearly like I can do it, I can work through this.

Having that break definitely helps obviously to calm yourself down, but also to kind of reset and think I can do this. So, yeah, I used the break well to sort of restart, go again, and try and actually think clearly about what I'm doing.

Q. Were you shouting? What were you doing?

JACK DRAPER: No, you just talk to yourself. I can do this. I've heard Djokovic say it a few times in his career. He has gone two sets to love down, and he has a go at himself. I think it's important to not dwell on it. I'm definitely someone who has always tried to have good positive self-talk and to get myself out of situations.

I kind of just looked at myself in the mirror and said, Come on, we need to try and do this. I know it's going to be two sets now, and give it your all. It's the Australian Open. Only going to be here once this year. It's a big event. Just confident talk.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports loop