

Australian Open

Tuesday, 16 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Thanasi Kokkinakis

Press Conference



T. KOKKINAKIS/S. Ofner

7-6, 2-6, 6-7, 6-1, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Thanasi, obviously a different feeling last year. So tell us about how you're feeling. Massive crowd, and you've done it in front of the home fans.

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, there's no better feeling, for sure. Also, tight third set in a breaker. Crowd lifted me up. They were incredible the whole match. As it started to get a little cooler, it got packed. Yeah, they were incredible.

I thought my composure was great. Definitely I know the other match last year was five hours, 45, and this one was over four, but definitely a little less sore and a little more pep in my step after a win, that's for sure.

Q. How much were you thinking of the previous three times you lost five-setters at AO? You talked about fighting demons out there.

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: I didn't think of the other ones sort of in the past. I thought a little bit of last year, but I kind of -- I felt like I kind of conquered that a little bit after beating Stan at French in five sets. That was a battle as well.

For me I was just trying to stay composed. I know in five sets there's so many sort of mini-matches in between the actual match, so you just have to stay level, pick and choose when to use the crowd and when to use your energy.

Yeah, I just had to weather the storm from him. And he's good player with a lot of firepower.

Q. What's it like playing someone like that who I think you get close to 80 winners? Is it just a patience game that the point having to sort of let him make his mistakes and take the winners when they come?

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, it's tricky because usually I'm the one kind of dictating and hitting more winners hopefully than my opponent. Sometimes he was

kind of taking it to me, and I got a little passive, and that's when he started dictating a little bit in the second set. He started flushing winners out of nowhere.

My serve helped me a lot. Every big point I started landing serves. Yeah, it was just a battle. There's not much in these matches as I've been on the receiving end a few times. Yeah, he showed why he is a 30-something in the world player. He's very good.

Q. You made the comment about losing motivation away from January. I know you were sort of meaning it in a positive way about the Australian summer and how much you love it. What does that say about sort of the battles you are having away from Australia and in trying to I guess reach your potential as a player?

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, it's just tough. I find it, to be honest, very difficult to kind of bring my intensity and level sort of week in, week out as the year gets longer and longer. There's barely any offseason in this sport. I know you might look in the headlines I'm a bit of a brat, complaining about something that we get paid well to do, but it is.

I'm very jealous of the sports that kind of can play sort of eight months and then have some time off and regroup. It feels like with tennis you're always kind of looking over your shoulder as to what's next. There's no time to really decompress.

I know you can pick and choose your tournaments, but if you do that too much and take too much time off, guys are going to lap you. It's a tricky sport, and that's something that I'm always trying to get better at.

Q. Brisbane and Adelaide obviously didn't go according to plan. Was there a change in mindset after Adelaide in that week leading up to the Open?

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Mostly after Brisbane. After Brisbane I honestly didn't feel like I tried my best. I didn't bring my most energy and intensity.

Then sort of before Adelaide I kind of started knuckling down a lot and then just I gave it everything in that match, didn't quite go the way I wanted. There were some positive signs. Then, yeah, just back to training here and getting after it.



So, yeah, the start wasn't ideal for me, but that's why you keep working to come on top with matches like that. I'm not saying I deserved it more than him, but I felt like I deserved that match, for sure.

Q. Figuring out that motivation, to go back to that topic again, is that the key to you breaking into the top 50, top 30, whatever it is, taking that next step? You've been 65 in the world. How do you do it?

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: I think it's a big part. I think it's probably my biggest part. Of course, there are things in my game that I can get better, but I think just constantly applying myself day in, day out, week in, week out, all year is probably the thing that I struggle with the most. That's what these top guys do so well, and that's why they're ranked where they are.

Q. How do you change that?

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: No idea. I'm 27 now, and I wish I would have figured it out by now. Just keep working. It comes a lot from myself, but yeah, from my team as well. We have some conversations and some things that we try and get better at.

Yeah, it's just a day-to-day process of trying to do the right things and getting after it.

Q. Dimitrov next. He is in incredible form. Obviously won in Brisbane. I don't think you've played each other before. Can we get your take on that?

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: We played doubles I think in Brisbane maybe 2014, I think. Yeah, good guy. Playing incredible tennis. He's in close to the form of his career, I think. He's always in great shape and a great mover.

Yeah, I back myself. I played guys like him before. One-handed backhand. I'm going to try to be aggressive and take it to him and kind of hopefully make him feel uncomfortable out there. It's going to be a very tough match, and I'm going to bring my best.

Q. Coming off a five-set match, what will be the recovery process?

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Sorry, I was a bit late here. I was in the ice. Ice bath, massage, hopefully sleep well.

It's always tough after a match like that. We have a lot of adrenaline finishing sort of at nighttime. It's tough to decompress. Yeah, hopefully see how I'll pull up tomorrow and probably more of the same tomorrow. Yeah, just try and be as fresh as possible coming into the next one.

Q. How do you plan to use the crowd while you're here? Two years ago I know that Kyrgios and Kokkinakis doubles, you definitely used the crowd, you hyped up the crowd as much as they hyped up you. Do you plan to do that this time around?

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: In a way it's a little easier in doubles because you don't really have to worry about saving your energy. I can't hype my crowd up for five sets. It's very tough. You have to pick and choose your moments.

They didn't pick and choose their moments. They were up the whole time, which was incredible for me. The support here is always nuts. It's a balance. You want to hype the crowd, but you also want to remember kind of you're playing an opponent, and the crowd is not going to beat them for you. So you have to stay locked in and kind of use them when need be.

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