

Australian Open

Friday, 19 January 2024
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Rinky Hijikata Jason Kubler

Press Conference

HIJIKATA-KUBLER/Djere-O'Connell

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Rinky and Jason, coming in as defending champions, and you've got your campaign off to a great start. I'll start with you Rinky. How was it on court today?

RINKY HIJIKATA: It was good to be back here playing. I think both of us had a tough one in singles, so just to be out there again was good fun. It was a good atmosphere. It was pretty packed out there on Show Court 3. It was just fun to be playing a but of dubs again.

THE MODERATOR: Jason.

JASON KUBLER: To repeat what Rink said, we had a couple of tough ones in the singles. So I think to come back out here on the doubles court, have a bit more fun in front of a lot of people this morning was definitely a good thing. Especially, yeah, the last couple of days.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. There's been a bit of a resurgence in Australian doubles here and with Storm Hunter doing so well as well. How do you think how doubles is regarded in this country? Do you think it gets enough respect?

JASON KUBLER: I think so, especially the last couple of years. I think with Nick and Thanasi winning two years ago, I think that really... I find that the fans really enjoyed and really get into it because I found last year the crowds were going crazy for us.

I definitely think we've always been a pretty good nation at doubles, and at the moment we have definitely a handful of teams that can make deep runs.

Q. Obviously last year was just so much fun every step of the way. Are you taking it a touch more serious this year as defending champions, or still just having that fun?

RINKY HIJIKATA: Probably similar to last year. Yeah, I



think we don't really have too much expectations going into this tournament. Yeah, we may have started a couple of doubles drills earlier in the week this week than last year. But, yeah, for the most part we just kind of are similar mindset to last year.

Q. Question for Rinky. As you said, you had quite tough match in Court 3 in the singles. When you come back today for the doubles, did that memory of singles come back to you, or how did you feel about that?

RINKY HIJIKATA: I just try to erase it from my memory. Yeah, that match never happened, so just move on as quick as I can (laughing).

JASON KUBLER: What match? What match?

RINKY HIJIKATA: I didn't play singles this week. I don't know what you are talking about (laughing).

Q. Max and Jordan obviously had a good match as well. Do you see them as a bit of a danger?

RINKY HIJIKATA: I think they could be the third straight Aussie pair to win the tournament, if I'm honest. I got to play with Max in Tokyo, and I've seen Thommo play a ton. They're both unbelievable doubles players. Both have really good serves. I think they're going to be pretty tough to beat.

Now that they're both out of singles, so they can probably focus on their dubs a bit more. Yeah, I would say they're a very good shot to go deep these next couple of weeks.

Q. Scheduling is back on the agenda as it always seems to be at the Australian Open. There's this Olympian cutoff in upcoming tournaments. Do you have any thoughts on going late into the night Australian Open whether that's good for the players and any other considerations?

JASON KUBLER: I think it probably depends on I guess when their next match is after that. In the past when we've had late matches, we've always had that -- I guess sometimes it was the same day the day off and then play the following night. So you still get some time off.

In the other tournaments where it's more of a condensed



tournament, six or seven days, and you are having to come back the same day to play I think is a little bit tough.

Luckily with all the Grand Slams, especially here as well, you get a late finish, and you get a lot of time to recover. I think ideally if we want to play our best, it's probably not unbelievable, but that just sort of happens when we're playing best of five and then you're following a men's match or something like that.

Q. Rinky, I think you might have been playing this week, but I can't really remember either. You played quite late, but not that late this week. Do you have any thoughts?

RINKY HIJIKATA: I'm not really sure what the fix would be, but I'm guessing it is tough. I think I finished maybe 12:30, and I would say had I won that match, it probably would have been quite difficult to get all my recovery in and go back and get a good night's rest and be able to back that up in a few days. I think it would be fairly difficult.

Obviously don't know because I didn't get the opportunity. Then there are matches finishing even later than that. I don't really have any personal experiences of it, but I could see how it would be tough to back that up in a couple of days time.

Also, it was still pretty fun, and people stay out late. I guess it's a bit of a Catch-22.

Q. Have you done any work on your nickname in the past 12 months, your combination? Do you have one?

JASON KUBLER: Not really. We haven't really won that many matches anyway.

RINKY HIJIKATA: You have to win matches to get a nickname.

JASON KUBLER: The momentum is not really there. Maybe we can win a few more matches here and then maybe we can kick-start that again. But, no, we haven't.

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