

Australian Open

Friday, 19 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/T. Etcheverry

6-3, 6-3, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Straight into questions, please.

Q. Do you feel you're back to something like your best in this match?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, but I played better than I did in the first two rounds, so that's a positive change, I guess. Starting to feel better game-wise and physically, as well. It's positive signs.

I still haven't been playing at my best.

Q. You've been involved in very late matches here before. Medvedev's match went incredibly late last night. Do you and other players have concerns this is still not being addressed?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I think it is addressed, to be honest. I know Grand Slams have had conversations about this. They obviously try to start the tournament a day earlier, et cetera. The daily schedule and the time of the matches are scheduled is a problem obviously when you have men's playing best-of-five can happen, as it did last night with day matches went five sets. Medvedev, again, started at 11 p.m.

Yeah, it's not ideal situation to be in that, for sure. I don't know. I mean, I don't see Grand Slams on main courts, particularly on the center court, changing the format of having day matches and night matches because that's how they sell their tickets. That's how they commercialize. That's how they promote.

I just don't see it being one session for the entire day. That would help for the players definitely, because then maybe we would have an extra few hours in some days if it starts at 11 or 12, depending on how many matches are scheduled.

I guess the other option is scheduling one less match on the center court, as well. I'm sure that Grand Slams are taking a lot of different possibilities in the equation, in consideration. That's all I can say.

Q. In some moment of the match, we can see you very frustrated or uncomfortable with your game, with some shots. I would like to know in that particular moment, which is the thing that you talk by yourself? What is the plan in your mind to change that to keep focus?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, it's not always a positive pep talk. There's a lot of trash talk happening inside of my head. I guess it's part of the game. It's part of who I am. I mean, I'm quite certain that everyone goes through their crisis moments, particularly in the matches where they don't feel their best and they have doubts.

The question is how you overcome those doubts and focus on being in the present and trying to get the most out of yourself for the next point.

I do have extrovert kind of personality. I show my emotions - not always - but it does happen. When I show the bad side of my emotions, it's ugly and it's not something I enjoy. It is what it is.

I'm trying to fight the demons that I have, as anybody else, on the court. Sometimes it works better. Sometimes not so great. You just have to accept the circumstances, depending on how you feel against certain opponent on the given day. Sometimes you just wake up not feeling great, and you start to doubt that you can win a match or play well. Those are some of the things you have to deal with mentally during the match.

Q. Still had a bit of a runny nose out there tonight. Do you know exactly what it is? How much is it affecting you? Have you this a COVID test since you've been in Melbourne?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I haven't had a COVID test. It's kind of a regular viral infection that I've been through. Now it's in its last stages. I still have some secrete coming out. That's all it is.

Q. When you start a Grand Slam, do you ever have doubts it's not going to come for you during the fortnight?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: What exactly, sorry?

Q. The higher quality that you so often bring as the



tournament goes on. Do you have doubts maybe this time it's not going to be there?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Like going all the way through or just performing well on a given night or...

Q. That you're not going to find your rhythm.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Oh, yeah, yeah. I've been going through that very scenario every match here. Actually I'm really relieved and glad that I played the way I played and felt the way I felt tonight. Definitely much better than what was the case in the first two matches.

Yeah, coming into the tournament I haven't really felt great health-wise, physically, and also game-wise. It's all connected obviously. I haven't had a best out of the tournament in terms of the quality of tennis, but I'm in the fourth round.

I believe that things will progress as the tournament goes on. That's the case tonight and today. Hopefully every day will be better.

Q. You could play Shelton in the next round potentially. Your comments about him at the US Open, the respect...

THE MODERATOR: He just lost.

Q. When you first came on tour, you had a big personality and were very expressive. I'm wondering if there were ever any older players that made criticisms to you or gave you advice to do things that made you want to change your behavior? Was there a moment you can think of when someone else in the sport made you rethink things?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: That's a good question. I mean, I know certainly Federer didn't like the way I was behaving at the beginning. I think it didn't sit with him well. I don't know about the others.

I guess I wasn't the favorite type of guy to some of the top guys because I was not afraid to say that I want to be the best player in the world. I was kind of - not kind of - I was confident, and I felt like I have the game to back it up.

I never, ever lacked respect. Whenever I start a match, before the match or finish the match, I would always greet the opponent, always acknowledge. Respect is something that I was taught that needs to be present regardless of what is happening.

Obviously on the court a lot of things can happen in a kind of heat of a battle. It was very long time ago now, 20 years since I made my first debut I think on the professional tour. It's really hard to say who liked me

more or less. I think I named one, so I don't know. I can't recall others.

Q. Did you try to listen to them or ignore them and try to stay true to yourself?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: To who?

Q. Whoever was saying something negative to you.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It was fueling me even more. I mean, if I made a mistake, I would admit it and, of course, say I make a mistake, I raise my hand, I apologize or whatever. But if the criticism came with no particular reason I think, then I would just keep going the kind of direction that I chose, and that's it.

I knew and I know today that you can't have everyone liking you, who you are, how you play, how you behave, what you talk about. It's normal. We're all different. We are all different preferences.

As far as Shelton's level of confidence and coming out, I don't mind that actually at all. I think it's great. You got to believe. I'm all for that. I support 100% a young player coming out on the court, like Prizmic did the other night against me, and Shelton is doing coming out believing in his capabilities that he can challenge the best players in the world. I don't dislike that at all.

But there is obviously some kind of line, non-visible line, of acceptable behavior I guess towards the other player. If a player steps over that line, then obviously it starts being annoying. That's when you react or you don't react, whatever. It just depends.

But I'm all for young players showing confidence and speaking, always with respect, towards the older guys who are on the tour, but being confident in themselves and their tennis.

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