

Australian Open

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Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Rohan Bopanna

Matthew Ebden

Press Conference



BOPANNA-EBDEN/Machac-Zhang

6-3, 3-6, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Well done again, both of you. How special is it to be having another shot at a Grand Slam title on Saturday night?

ROHAN BOPANNA: Extremely special, thank you, Nicola. It's amazing to be back in another Grand Slam final, and a different Grand Slam, you know, especially I think -- I know for Matt it's definitely the home Grand Slam. For me also I consider this a lot to be the home Grand Slam, coming from the Asian continent.

Yeah, I think the matchup today was tough. The guys, you know, really made us work through every single point, every single game. I think Matt and me held strong, you know, in more than once out there.

The guys, even when I served for the match, we were expecting big returns, and unfortunately I got broken there. Next game we had three match points, and credit to Zhang, the way he played, there is one match point where he hit I think 200-plus on the serve and Matt got the return back. That one forehand went so fast past me.

Before I even could move the racquet it was gone (smiling).

But I think overall the experience of playing together I think helped us come through that super-tiebreak there, for sure.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah. I mean, another slam final here. It's match by match, that's what we've learned. Even the last few months, lots of finals. We've won some to win some titles and we lost a few too. We know just to think of it as one more match and just go through there and fight for one more match at a time.

I'm really not going to do anything other than that. I'm not looking too far ahead. Just another tough match on Saturday. But of course very happy and excited at the same time.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You had the experience two years ago, obviously reaching the final. What would it mean to your whole career to get the chance to win a home slam?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Definitely. I've been lucky to have won this tournament in mixed doubles some years back, I know what that feels like. I'll count that as a blessing, for sure. Of course the plan is to win it here, this one. Hopefully many more.

You never know what goes on, what happens. Yeah, I mean, we lost a final a few months back, so, you know, and couple years ago. I know what that's like to lose as well. I know what it's like to win Wimbledon and to win here in Aussie in mixed. Bops has won in the French before. Yeah, these are the matches you want to be playing and competing for.

Whatever happens, I'm happy to be out there competing for Grand Slam titles. Doing a lot of all the right things with each other and our partners and our coaches and teams and stuff. It's excellent. It's where we want to be playing our tennis and giving ourselves a chance to win all these big tournaments.

Q. What are your recollections of 2013?

MATTHEW EBDEN: 2013? Yeah, with Jarmila, it was a little bit more of a surprise, mixed doubles, but with a fellow Aussie was fun. I think looking back we played nine out of ten of the players we beat were Grand Slam champions themselves in doubles or mixed or whatever.

So it was a bit of a surprise package, but we knew we were good players but we didn't know we were maybe that good just yet (smiling). So, yeah, to win that one together back then was pretty special.

Yeah, to follow it up with a lot more doubles. These last couple of years for me it's been a really fast and fun transition into full-time doubles. I'm really enjoying it.

Q. Ro, it's been 24 hours now. Has the whole No. 1 aspect sunk in?

ROHAN BOPANNA: To be honest, it is still sinking in. A lot of, a lot of messages, a lot of love, which came in, you know. But obviously the first and foremost was for me to



get ready and be ready for playing semifinal match.

You know, I think once the tournament is fully done and I have a couple of weeks at home at least, I think I can really, you know, relive that moment.

But of course very, very proud to be in this position and be ranked as the No. 1 player in the world.

Q. For either of you, a couple of veterans, fifth slam together, can you give us a snapshot as to how you formed a team and how you connect both on the court and off the court, how you two came together?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, I think go back just over 12 months, I think in about November 2022 we were both looking for partners at the end of the season for the new year, for last year. We were both sort of pretty highly ranked, we were one of -- well, two people that were pretty highly ranked that could join up that didn't have a partnership. Because most guys in the top 30 already have a partnership. They keep playing, you know, the following years. It's only rare that a couple teams here or there maybe they split or one retires or something that someone becomes available.

Yeah, we knew we each became available and we talked about it, and we thought it could work, like, he plays on the deuce side, I've been playing on the ad. That immediately was a good fit.

Then also, we've known each other I think more than 15 years ago, I remember Bops played Hopman Cup once in Perth, in my hometown, and I think I practiced with him. He played with Sania Mirza there, and I was training and coming up playing futures, challengers, and whatever, and we practiced together way back then.

You know, we've seen each other on the tour all the years while I was playing singles and he was playing doubles. Then more and more I suppose when I became in transition to doubles the last few years. So it was easy to start, let's say, and to have a go and see if it worked.

But then, you know, first couple tournaments we played we lost. But like we said before, we each had the experience, and I think the maturity to at least give it a good few months and work at it and make it work.

I think a lot of guys maybe, you know, lose a couple times and think, oh, this doesn't work and they quickly want to change.

We stuck with it. We believed in ourselves and each other what we could do, and just kept persevering with it.

Q. For both of you. About communication again, you were serving for the match. Then the three match points with his serve. What is going through,

when you're at the change of ends, do you all talk? Do you all communicate at that point or do you all prefer to just do your own thing? How does that work?

ROHAN BOPANNA: I think the key is to keep communicating. It does help and does make a difference. Of course you want to win that game and close it out there. It doesn't always go to play. So that's when I think it is important to keep each other positive and keep pushing each other.

I think, you know, Matt came and spoke to me there, you know, at that changeover and, you know, he kept me positive there. And the very next game, you know, we ended up getting quickly to match point.

Credit to them, you know, in that game. But having said that, I think earlier in Zhang's serve as well we had a chance to break him and go double break up, and these matches like this sometimes it is important. But I don't think we really had a definite play in one of those points that we could go back, look at it and say, we should have said something better. I think we did the right things.

A lot of credit goes to them too, you know, for their coming back in that third set.

Q. Matt, can you speak any words in Hindi? Rohan, is there any Aussie slang that you may have picked up?

ROHAN BOPANNA: "Hey, Mate." That's not a slang.

MATTHEW EBDEN: I learned something last year, I was meant to come to India for some league and exhibitions, and unfortunately injured my ankle at Davis Cup and couldn't make it. But I learned (speaking Hindi). I think it means "See you on the court," or something.

ROHAN BOPANNA: I tell you what he really meant. He said (speaking Hindi). Yeah, exactly, there you go. (Laughter.) It means "Come on the court."

MATTHEW EBDEN: "See you on the court." "Come on the court," yeah.

ROHAN BOPANNA: There you go. But I think more than slang in Australian, he's South African, I should be learning some Afrikaans, maybe, from him.

MATTHEW EBDEN: We can teach you some Aussie slang. You've been coming here long enough.

Q. Rohan, I don't know how much the Olympics are on your mind this year. Speaking of, how would you go about looking for a successful partner both in doubles and mixed?

ROHAN BOPANNA: Definitely looking forward, you know, to play in Paris. Mixed is definitely out of the question. There is no one, no girl ranked high enough for me to even get in there unless maybe Sania has a protected ranking and she's coming back (smiling).

There is no one ranked I know. So mixed, there is no Indian team going there. You can't choose, if you're top 10, for mixed doubles. You can choose only for men's doubles.

We have a good bunch of guys ranked from the 60s to 140, almost 10 guys in the ranking in India right now who are playing full-time doubles. I think there is a very good, you know, bunch of players who I could really choose from. I just need to figure out who is good on the clay court, because we're gonna be playing, you know, in Roland Garros.

In December we had a great training camp with all these guys there. I organized it in Bangalore. So I really got to spend more time with them. You know, I'm helping them as well on the circuit currently with all these guys in getting a physio and coach traveling with them. I have ten guys in part of the program. It's called the Doubles Dream of India.

I started this program two years ago, and we have, with the help of a sponsor, we are sponsoring coaches and physios to travel with these guys. Hence, that has really helped bring in a lot more players pushing each other.

But yeah, I still need to decide on who exactly I will be playing with, though.

Q. Rohan, I saw you had a congratulatory message from Sachin Tendulkar. What's your relationship like with Mr. Tendulkar? What was it like getting that message?

ROHAN BOPANNA: I think it's amazing that he follows tennis for a long, long time, and he was there at Wimbledon watching our match, as well. He's a dear friend. I met him a bunch of times. Had dinner with him a couple of times.

MATTHEW EBDEN: I'm coming next time. (Laughter.)

ROHAN BOPANNA: No, I think it's always nice when you, you know, receive congratulatory message from another legend, you know, in a sport. So, you know, I'm really happy and thankful, you know, for that message.

Q. Matty, how many family do you have here? I asked that a couple years ago. It was a really tough situation where I think the rules changed when you flew home. Are you able to reflect on how tough that was? And who have you got in your entourage this year?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yes, so I have my wife and my little baby boy who I was flying home to see be born at that time.

Yeah, in the second week two years ago, Perth started having some COVID cases and the border closed and they wanted to put me in two weeks' quarantine in the hotel. The baby was due within two weeks of finishing here.

So I was on the first flight home. Went in to do hotel quarantine. Got locked up in a hotel. Luckily after seven days the cases diminished, and they let everyone out. Well, after the seven days they came and announced, oh, from tomorrow midnight, everyone is free to go.

So that was lucky, and I was there for the birth of my baby boy. He's here with my wife -- he's asleep at the creche, like, a hundred meters away. And he's been playing there with Bops' little baby girl, as well, who is a little bit older than him.

He's loving the creche and the tennis. My wife is there too. The rest of the family is all back home. They got to have a big tennis fix during United Cup, which was in Perth, so they got to enjoy all that so they're not all here this year.

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