

Australian Open

Friday, 26 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



J. SINNER/N. Djokovic

6-1, 6-2, 6-7, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: We will take a few questions in English. English questions, anybody?

Q. Throughout the game you faced a lot of adversity, and yet you maintained an amazing composure. What do you tell yourself in those moments? What would you like to tell to your fans out there?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, first I want to congratulate Sinner for playing a great match, great tournament so far. He's deservedly in the finals. He outplayed me completely today.

Look, I was, in a way, shocked with my level, you know, in a bad way. There was not much I was doing right in the first two sets (smiling).

Yeah, I guess this is one of the worst Grand Slam matches I've ever played. At least that I remember.

Yeah, not a very pleasant feeling playing this way. But at the same time, you know, credit to him for doing everything better than me, you know, in every aspect of the game.

I tried, I fought. I managed to kind of raise the level a little bit in the third, saved match point, played a good tiebreak. But again, you know, the fourth set, very bad game to lose, you know, 40-Love up on 1-2, and kind of against the wind a little bit. Yeah, just overall the performance-wise level of my tennis was, you know, really not great.

I guess in those moments you just try to, you know, find the serenity, but at the same time try to uplift, you know, yourself and your game. That's what I tried, but, you know, and the crowd was great. I think they were really fair towards both players. Lots of support for both Jannik and I.

That's all. You know, congratulations to him.

Q. Did it take you completely by surprise that your level was off? Anything in the warmup, anything in

the days leading up to it or is it just one of those things?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: To be honest, you know, the whole tournament I haven't really played close to my best. Match maybe against Mannarino was great, but most of the matches I was, yeah, not playing up to par, so to say, the way I play here in Australia normally.

So in a way it did surprise me, because I thought, you know, it won't be that bad in the first two sets. But in the other hand, I didn't feel really myself on the court during this tournament. One can say semifinals is a great result, of course, but I always expect, yeah, the highest of myself, and it wasn't meant to be today.

Q. First completed match of your Grand Slam career where you haven't had a breakpoint to try and convert. Were you aware of that on the court? How unique of an experience was that for you as someone who has been one of the best returners of the game?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, probably that stat says a lot. I mean, first of all, he was serving, he was serving very accurately precise, he was backing his serve very well.

Yeah, myself, I just, yeah, I just -- it's hard to describe, you know, everything, I mean, we don't have that much time. There's a lot of negative things that I've done on the court today in terms of my game that I'm not really pleased with in return or, you know, movement or forehand, backhand. Everything, you know, was just subpar.

So, yeah, he was very dominant. Dominant on his service games. Obviously if you serve well and if you don't face a breakpoint, you know, it plays with the mind of your opponent, meaning you can put more pressure on his service games, my service games in this case, and you kind of swing freely.

Yeah, I mean, congrats to him. He just played a flawless match.

Q. I would like to put you in some months. The next Grand Slam is Roland Garros. Who do you think is the favorite in Paris?



NOVAK DJOKOVIC: That's really far away. Let's see how, you know, how the players play in the next several months, particularly on the clay, in the clay season. It's completely different surface, conditions. Some players, you know, are probably more favorites than others on clay, you know, just because it's kind of a surface that suits certain type of tennis players.

But of course, you know, if Nadal is playing, he's always a favorite there, No. 1, no doubt. Regardless of the fact that he hasn't played much, but he is who he is in Roland Garros. Of course Alcaraz, Sinner. Anybody that is on the top, you know. I think rankings-wise you can take the first five, ten players in the world, and everyone is a favorite to win.

It still takes several months, so let's see how everything evolves.

Q. It's been so long since you have lost here, more than 30 matches in a row you have won. Wonder if losing makes you appreciate at all how incredible this streak you had in this city has been?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I'm kind of hot-headed right now. After the match it's very difficult to reflect on things in a more profound way.

Maybe tomorrow, maybe in a few days' time, but I definitely have a lot to be very proud of, about, in terms of what I have achieved here.

The streak was going to end, you know, one day. It was going to happen, and, you know, at least I gave everything I possibly can under circumstances where I didn't play well, and I lost to, you know, a player that has a very good chance to win his first slam. That's all it is.

But yeah, this has been a very special city, best, by far, Grand Slam of my career. Yeah, I just hope that I'll get a chance to come back, yeah, to play at least another time and go through the emotions once more.

Q. Novak, that's the third time Jannik has beaten you since November, and you were unbeaten against him before that. Can you tell us you've noticed has changed in Jannik's game to take him to the next level?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: He was always smacking the ball really hard from both forehand and backhand corner. Just he's famous kind of for that, just slaps the ball, you know, plays very quick, loves to be aggressive.

I think his serve improved a lot. He's hitting his corners very well, and I think he up his speed, as well. Serving bigger now and more precise. Movement overall and mental part. You know, he was always very calm, very composed in the court, but I think he struggled maybe to

win the big matches, you know, in the big moments.

But now it's coming together for him. Of course Darren Cahill, who is very experienced coach and someone that has worked with former No. 1s in the world, obviously having him in his corner is very helpful, you know, from the mental side of things, of course, along with everything else.

Yeah, he's got a great team, he's on a very good path. He's going to have a chance in couple days to win his first Grand Slam.

Q. You mentioned the entire two weeks you felt like you haven't been at your best. You're 36 years old now. Does it feel like you're finally starting to play at your own age after such an insane period, and this younger generation at your level, or it's just another tournament?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Let's see (smiling). Don't know. I still have high hopes, you know, for other slams, Olympics, and whatever tournaments that I'll play. It's just the beginning of the season.

It's not the feeling that I'm used to. I mean, it kind of has been incredibly satisfying for me, you know, to start off most of my seasons with a Grand Slam win and never lost in semis or finals of Australian Open.

So this time it's a bit different, but it is what it is. Let's see. I don't know. This tournament hasn't been, as I said, up to my standard or criteria or the level that I would normally play or expect myself to play, but doesn't necessarily mean that it's beginning of the end, you know, as some people like to call it.

Yeah, let's see what happens in the rest of the season.

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