

Australian Open

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Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Rohan Bopanna

Matthew Ebden

Press Conference



BOPANNA-EBDEN/Bolelli-Vavassori

7-6, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Congrats to both. A question to both of you. Is this your best moment ever on a tennis court? You won Wimbledon, Matt, but this probably tops it.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, I mean, to win a slam here at home, I mean, I had some emotions similar, I won the mixed doubles here, but obviously the men's doubles it's a bigger event, obviously not the singles, but it's a big event.

To win my home slam after winning Wimbledon, I'm not going to lie, Wimbledon is a special place for us as tennis players, we know that, but this is equally as good or better doing it at home with our family, friends, and home fans in Australia.

We said it's the Grand Slam of the Asia-Pacific and to do it with a fellow Asia-Pacific man, an Indian guy with Aussie guy, I think it's pretty awesome that we got the title.

ROHAN BOPANNA: For me, without a doubt the best moment in my career. I mean, there is so many, so many thoughts which are running. Yeah, the head is like as if it's ready to explode, having so many things which, you know, are going on (smiling).

But, you know, with the year we had last year, to continue and start off like this and win a Grand Slam, you know, no better player to do it with.

Like Matt said, it is a home slam, after all. Amazing, amazing feeling. Yeah. And Nicola actually just brought us straight off the court, I didn't have time for me to think. (Laughter.) Straight into it.

MATTHEW EBDEN: It's the best, raw.

ROHAN BOPANNA: When you win, this is what happens. I haven't been on this side of, you know, the life, so it's nice to do this.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Congratulations. Long overdue, Rohan, particularly. Since teaming up last year you've had very quick success; semis at Wimbledon, final U.S., and one better this year at the Oz Open. What do you attribute to your quick success as a doubles pair?

MATTHEW EBDEN: I think our experience and maturity, first of all. Our first two tournaments we lost first round, first round, in January last year. Really, our experience, our maturity, we've both been around a while. He even more than me. I'm still well into my 30s too after a long career as well.

I think we just knew that we could keep trusting our level. We knew we each had a really great level to bring, and then it was about finding a way to make it work. There was no reason it couldn't or shouldn't work.

I personally had to improve too. I think we both challenged each other to improve in certain areas. I think that part of the partnership has been a godsend maybe for both of us, because I feel like we both improved a heck of a lot over 12 months ago. I know I certainly have. I've seen Bops playing incredible this last 6 to 9 to 10 months as well.

I think we've been really good for each other, pushing each other, encouraging each other, and almost learning from each other's strengths, and then borrowing each other's strengths and learning and sort of improving our games wholeheartedly.

I think these days to win in doubles or to be No. 1, the best, you have to be really great in every area. You can't just be a serve-volleyer or have a bad forehand or have bad returns or a bad serve or something. The level is so, so, so high, so I think that's what I can put it down to.

Q. Congrats. Rohan, it's an incredible achievement. You spoke on the court about struggling to win matches and thoughts of quitting the game. To now being the No. 1 in the world and winning a Grand Slam. As a proud representative for 1.4 billion people back home in India, do you have any words of wisdom and advice from your experience, what those



going through similar testing times?

ROHAN BOPANNA: I think the No. 1 thought which comes to my head is to, you know, not really have limitations. We set ourselves those limitations. You know, as human beings, we have goals. Then we, when we don't achieve that quickly or at a time frame, we think that's the end of that journey.

So I think the biggest thing is, you know, to speak about it, to speak about how you're feeling, whether it is even to yourself. If you just want to sit in a room. I think I still remember back in Estoril, in Portugal, I was sitting there, I had not won a match for the first four months of my journey. That's when I told my wife, I told Scott as well, my coach, that, you know, I don't think I can go any further. I'm not winning matches. I've been playing 20 years of tennis. I've never had this terrible of a start, not winning matches.

I think just expressing that, you know, relaxed me. I then said, okay, let's just go and start enjoying what I'm doing. I said, okay, let's persevere and see where I can push it, and let's try and finish the season strong and then take it from there.

I think that was the key. Not just yes, I had thoughts of quitting and stopping, but to just persevere and enjoy what I was doing, I think, you know, the best thing I told myself.

Q. Congratulations, both of you. What are the first thoughts as soon as Bops knocked away the overhead? What are the first thoughts that came to both your heads? You both reacted the same way, fell on your backs. If you can just talk a little about it.

ROHAN BOPANNA: It was so much weight on the shoulders when it -- you know, it just came off. Automatically I fell down. (Laughter.)

Yeah, I don't know, but yeah, that moment, I don't think you think of how you're going to celebrate or what you're going to celebrate. I was first just thinking, don't miss that smash. It was probably the easiest smash on match point ever. Especially to win a Grand Slam.

It was a huge relief, especially in my case. For years and years I've been trying to, you know, get there. I mean, the hurdle was tough. I mean, of course it's tough. There are a few players, yes, make it easier than it actually is. But to still be at it, working day in, day out.

These two weeks, to be honest, Scottie just told me one thing is that go after and play your aggressive style of play no matter what the situation, what the score was. You know, I think that really worked well for us. You know, the calmness we bring in on the court, no matter what the situation is, first round we were down Love-5. I

mean, I don't think that fazed us. We were just trying to win a game.

That is the biggest strength we bring as a partnership. And it is obviously -- if we are both playing great we are untouchable on that court, but then at situations, close moments, when we are focused and understand what the game plan is, I think that is our biggest strength.

Today, especially in that tiebreak, you know, I think we played the best tennis of the week in the tiebreak.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, yeah, what he said takes me back, I had that same feeling at Wimbledon couple years ago, the moment we won match point. You just lose all comprehension of your body and you collapse.

I saw him collapse, and then I was, like, oh, yeah, I'm going to lie down and just enjoy this moment too.

I didn't have the initial -- I mean, I saw the smash go up for a sitter, I was, like, oh, this is over. I was pretty happy. Just saw him collapse. I was, like, all right, I'm going to head down and just lay down and enjoy the moment. Yeah, special moment.

I mean, I think on the flip side after winning one or two and whatever, then you try not to overthink it or make it too much bigger of a deal than it is so that you can remain present and calm and play it like just another match. In the end it is just another match but of course it's a great big match.

These are the moments we play for. We'd be lying if we said we weren't happy, excited, wanting to win the big titles, the big matches, the finals.

But yeah, I'm happy with the balance we kept and showed. I think we took even another step up these last couple of weeks after a tough loss in Adelaide. I think the week before in the final, I think maybe that was the final learning thing for us as a team to even help us improve a little bit more to get us through more tough moments. Since round 1, like he said, we've been fighting through tough moments. It's for me been the model of the tournament. We've just been fighting through tough moments.

When we play great, like he said, great, we win some sets. There's tough conditions, there's incredible players from round 1. So yeah, it's been a fun two weeks.

Q. Rohan, what do you say to all the youngsters out there who look at a 43-year-old Grand Slam winner and a World No. 1 thinking, Oh, I can knock him off?

ROHAN BOPANNA: I think there's a mutual respect in that locker room. Everybody's coming through that journey. They've all been through that journey.

I don't think there is a player who really thinks that way. You know, for the youngsters coming in, it's a great learning, you know. We are constantly looking at, you know, players who have been there on the circuit for a long time. Especially when I came into the locker room, everything is overwhelming, you have champions and you're sitting right next to them. You know, it's not like the locker room, everyone is separated.

So I think there's a lot of wisdom to give back to the youngsters. I think a lot of them come, I've spoken to them many times. They really appreciate, you know, what little feedback can be done and how to go about a few things.

When I see them move, I really wish I could move like that. I learned my anticipation more than my sliding into the court. Yesterday I was watching Jannik Sinner, he was sliding in to hit a pass. I was like, I never did it on clay court and these guys are doing it on the hard courts. I'm in awe with the way they move.

I think it's just wonderful to just be around and it's a very good space, you know, where everybody I think is not really thinking twice of how they're feeling or what they're communicating. Everybody, that's their own space and it's a beautiful space, that locker room, to hang out with everyone.

Q. Matt, I think you're on the player council. What's your vision for doubles? Do you feel like it has more potential? Where would you like to see it go and how would you like to see it get there?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, can I answer one tiny part of his question first too? What he said is so true and it's a smart way to look at it. I think this is also, for me, been a lesson in ageism, let's say. We see sexism, but there is a thing, ageism, and we see it a lot in media, people, culture, whatever.

I see it. We see it. Of course I have the oldest partner on the tour, I think. It's natural. Guys say, Oh, he's so old, too old. What I've heard in the last year now, seriously, I'm like, Guys, and... Watch how the guy plays tennis. What does age have to do with it?

For me, it's a lesson in that. And what he said, it's the youngsters learning that. Like he said, that mutual respect needs to be respected, I think, because look at what's possible.

And it's not to be respected, like, in an egotistical way, I think it's to be respected in looking at the possibilities. I think obviously that's what Rohan is a symbol of right now. You know, he'll inspire the whole Indian generations and all that.

I hope us as Australians or our youngsters too can learn some of those similar lessons and even our culture in general. We all know what it's like, people older than us. We look at this or that, they shouldn't get a job or they can't do that, yada yada. Well, why not? We're all people, we're all whatever. We celebrate all sorts of equality and stuff. Anyway, enough about that.

The vision for doubles? Yeah, we've led a big review for doubles the last six months. I've been on the council the last one year and pushed hard to get a review into doubles. Since I've transitioned into doubles the last two to three years from singles, I get it. I know how singles players view doubles; I know how doubles players view doubles; and I know how doubles players view singles players.

The mixture of arguments on the tour for singles and doubles and prize money and this and that, and so I wanted the review for six months to take place to let's just figure out really the purpose of doubles, where it fits, why it exists, why it's valued. If it's not, why not?

So, yeah, the vision now for doubles after this review with a lot of other council members but also tournament directors, ATP staff, Grand Slam staff, data analytic stuff, all this stuff, doubles has a slight difference from singles in that it can be slightly more entertainment-based around the court. It's quicker, it's faster. But because it's not long, grueling points, let's say, or even as mental, it's more execution and short-based, there is space for tennis in doubles to have fans engaging, be closer to the court, maybe some music, maybe no sitting down after one end, just keep the game running, keep it interactive. Yeah, a bit more like that.

Doubles has been a little bit ignored from the ATP and it's valued at, let's say, 20% of the ATP, whatever, in total prize money of the year. I challenge them, I said, Guys, you've got 20% of your asset here, you're neglecting it. What are you doing? Let's maximize it for all it's worth, and off we go.

Now we're going to play slightly later in Masters and slams, is one of the plans for this year and next year. You know, it's no secret, it's not singles, it's not the grand, main event, but it has value to leading to singles later in the tournaments when there's hardly any singles matches by quarterfinals. You need doubles before or after. You've got the semis, if there's an injury, a walkover, you need the doubles.

There is value there. We want also top singles players playing doubles properly, committing. The singles versus doubles guys, good. Singles players playing doubles, other singles players is good. Hopefully what we also see the top doubles teams against top doubles teams is really good and entertaining too. The marketing is the last aspect of that.

Q. Matty, you touched on ageism just then.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Is that a word? (Laughter.)

Q. You joked about thinking of yourself at level 43 rather than age 43, but in all seriousness, how does the body feel recovering after matches and how long do you foresee yourself playing, or, like you said, before, do you not give yourself any limits?

ROHAN BOPANNA: I think right now I'm playing my best tennis of my life. The biggest reason for that is also how I'm managing my body, my time, in terms of there are days when I tell my coach or Matty that I don't want to practice.

I think the recovery is a huge aspect of, you know, where I'm really focusing on to get ready, on to the matches. From the first day I landed here in Adelaide till yesterday, every single day I have been in the ice bath. I think that is a No. 1 recovery for me, which really makes it, helps all the inflammation in the body. And apart from that, you know, doing the mobility, you know, 45 minutes, hour before each practice, matches, getting my massage done.

I have invested in a physio who is really traveling with me a lot more sometimes than even my coach because that is an aspect I really need. No matter how much the coach wants me to play a particular way or particular style, if I'm not fit enough to do that, it doesn't make any sense.

So I think when I decided to play with Matty, I said, okay, let's figure out what I can do better to help this partnership. The No. 1 thing was to be 100% fit for all the matches that I'm playing.

I think thankfully Matt is someone who has respected that in terms of some days which I don't want to practice, and he understands where I'm coming from.

So I have stopped going to the gym. I really do specific kind of work for my body. I do a lot of yoga. In the morning I do some meditation to just start off the day. As I'm getting older, I feel I can't sleep past 7:30, 8:00. I'm up no matter what. Then I have some time by myself, and I enjoy that. Yeah, that has been the biggest key, which has really helped me be calmer and feel refreshed.

As long as I'm enjoying and playing my best tennis, I don't see there is any reason to really stop at the moment.

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