

Australian Open

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Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Simone Vagnozzi

Darren Cahill

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Simone and Darren, just absolutely congratulations on what has occurred tonight. Halfway through that third set, did you still have that belief that Jannik could get the job done?

SIMONE VAGNOZZI: Yeah, for sure was an incredible match. Daniil start so well, play so aggressive. The match change a little bit when Jannik broke him on 5-1, went 5-3, breakpoint to go back 5-4. Daniil a little bit step back at this point, maybe feel a little bit tired of the long tournament. Then we start to believe a little bit, because the first to 5-1 was really difficult.

DARREN CAHILL: I agree. I thought Daniil played an amazing tennis match considering what he's been through physically at this tournament. We knew he would come out aggressively, a bit more aggressive than he normally plays, but we didn't realize he was able to hold that level for so long, for the first couple of sets.

I agree when we got that break in the second set, we just saw a little bit of daylight for the first time in the first two sets. That gave him a bit of hope going into the early games of the third set.

But even still, I thought there was some service games in third set that Jannik did a really nice job to hold on to his serve, which was incredibly important, because of the way Daniil was serving. In periods of that match he was making 5 out of 6 first serves in every service game. It's tough to break him. If we gave away a break early in the third set, that was going to be tough to reel that back in.

I thought Jannik composed himself, showed great character, took care of his service games, and he gave himself a chance. He did really well.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You were really vocal throughout the match. We heard you, I think in the fourth set, He's tired. Then it might have been late in the fourth or early in the fifth, Champion mindset. Can you take us through your role as a coach in a match like that.

DARREN CAHILL: My role was less than what Simone's



role was, because Simone had to work out a way to get Jannik back into the contest. Once he got back into the contest, it was about the fight, because Daniil was never going to go away.

So a lot of the stuff that we were chatting about, made some adjustments, Simone was delivering those messages. He's done an incredible job with Jannik over the last couple of years. Then once you get to a fourth or fifth set, it really just becomes about what lies inside you. He had the answers inside him. You just have to force yourself to push through those moments to come up with the big shots and believe and be brave through those moments.

I just keep reinforcing the stuff we talk about all the time. Maybe it works; maybe it doesn't sometimes. But certainly today it kept his attention and his focus in the match, which was important.

Q. Darren, the sport is really crying out for a new superstar. Do you think that can be Jannik?

DARREN CAHILL: I do. I think this sport at the moment has a few superstars. I think Carlos is very similar to Jannik in both the way they play with the excitement level they bring to the game, and their personalities and their likability. Both guys are incredibly alike off the court. They both like each other. They both have a friendly rivalry. They both light it up when they play each other. I don't think any of their matches have ever been boring.

I think we have some really good personalities in the game at the moment, and it's important they keep winning. It's important they do what Jannik was able to do today, and that's to show a side of this young generation that are going to fight till the very end. They really want to make a name for themselves, and Jannik did that. Carlos has done that already a couple of times, the match he played at Wimbledon to beat Novak was just a special performance.

Our job now is just to make sure that we keep him pumped up. It's because it's the start of the year, it's a long year, and it's important to enjoy the moment but when we get back onto the tennis court we will try to keep him in that good mindset and try to keep him winning.



Q. After seeing Medvedev having a two set to love lead two years ago here and lose, as it started, people were saying, Oh, we've seen this before. Were you conscious of that as you're watching and if Jannik is? And if that sort of gives confidence that this very improbable comeback may not be as improbable as you might think?

SIMONE VAGNOZZI: It's really important, because in this tournament, he never had really long match, tough situation like today. And I think this match can give him a lot of confidence, no? And inspire him also for the next time, because when you come back one time from two sets to love you know that you are able to do it.

So I think it's really, really important.

DARREN CAHILL: Daniil went to hell and back in this tournament. What he put himself through physically. I didn't think he was going to beat Zverev, and he was able to come through that one.

There's been a couple of other matches where he was up against it, had his back against the wall, and he just continues to push himself and fights until the last point. Physically I can't even imagine how he's feeling. He must be hurting big-time.

Again, I give him a ton of credit not just for the way he played today but mentally just fighting until the last point. That's why he's already a Grand Slam champion, that's why he's had many chances to win more Grand Slams, and that's why he's going to have many more chances.

He's a hell of a player, a hell of a competitor. As Jannik said in the after-match, we learn every time we step on to the court playing Daniil, because I think his tennis IQ is as good as anybody's.

SIMONE VAGNOZZI: Chess player.

DARREN CAHILL: Yeah, chess player. And he finds different ways to break opponents down. That's where we have to keep problem-solving when we play him.

Q. You have been a part of other championship teams before. How is this championship team different? In the same sort of vein, what do all championship teams do you think have in common?

DARREN CAHILL: Well, that's an easy answer for me, because I'm working with the best coach that I've ever worked with in Simone. For me, I've never been able to work with a coach like him. I think he's doing an incredible job.

Every moment like this is special. It's an amazing feeling for the entire team when your player goes out there and achieves the greatness that Jannik achieved tonight.

This one is a little bit different because the team is very close. The Italian boys, they stick together. They work hard, they have fun, they enjoy themselves. The culture within the team is excellent. Everybody respects each other. And there's no one that's standing taller than anybody else. Everybody is level on the same playing field.

Everybody is heard, everybody has an opinion, including Jannik. We just try to digest that and get through it, and do what's best for Jannik.

These are special people, the Italian crew. I love them to death already. I've only been with them a year and a half, and I feel like I've been with them five years already. We have a really good connection.

Q. I just wondered, you mentioned Carlos earlier. Carlos having won two Grand Slams, having got there before Jannik, do you think that helped Jannik in any way maybe drive him on? Do you think it helped him believe that these younger guys could win slams?

DARREN CAHILL: Hell, yeah. Absolutely (smiling). There's no question seeing the young players come through and having success drives each and every one of them. Not just Jannik. They all desire it. They all want it. If they see one of their compatriots or someone of their generation having success, absolutely.

Then you look into what they're doing, why they're having success, and how are we going to replicate it for us.

Carlos has trail blazed for a lot of young players. We're thankful for that. He's a delight to watch play, and a delight to watch him on court. We aspire to be as good as him and hopefully one day be better than him, but at the moment we're chasing Carlos, and we'll continue to do that.

Q. The broader impact on Italian tennis, what does this success mean to Italian tennis? You've had so many great players throughout the years, you haven't been able to break through back to 1976. What does it mean?

SIMONE VAGNOZZI: I think it's a huge, huge success. I don't know what now is in Italy, because I think -- my phone is, I don't know, is still ringing. Yes, I think the last years with the Davis Cup, and now with the slam of Jannik is something unbelievable.

But it's coming from I think ten years ago, no? We have a federation that organize a lot of tournament so the young player can stay close to home. They can play a lot without spending a lot of money, because we know that tennis, it's difficult, especially for the young player.

I think we have, Darren speak good about me, but I think we have a lot of good cultures in Italy, a lot of ex-players that now start to coach. So that's help all the young player. For sure, example like Jannik, in the past Matteo Berrettini is part also the other one.

I was working with Marco Cecchinato when he made the semifinal. And after this semifinal, Matteo start to believe that he can do the same and he was in the final in Wimbledon, twice in semi. Now Jannik, so I think it's like... Yeah, it's really important.

DARREN CAHILL: I think also you had a lot of great female players, as well.

SIMONE VAGNOZZI: Yeah, Francesca Schiavone. I was speaking more for the men's side, but for sure also the woman's side was really important.

Q. You both obviously have had previous successful coaching stints with other players, and you chose to work with Jannik, as you did. Has he surprised you in the last few months in what he's been able to do on court, or even surprised you in the last couple weeks?

SIMONE VAGNOZZI: I think we was quite sure, no, that Jannik is able to reach this stage, no? This trophy. I think last year was really important for him, end of the year when he was able to beat Daniil and Carlos back to back. The first trophy in Toronto, Darren was there with him, was really important because was the really important first tournament that was Masters 1000 that he won.

So everything was a little bit step by step, no? And now I think he's going on the court more confident and also more confident about the team, no? What we tell to him, it's giving him belief, yes.

Q. He said a lovely thing about his parents, the fact that they never pressured him to play one sport. They let him do what he wants to do. How important has that been to his success? Is that refreshing to deal with?

DARREN CAHILL: You know his parents much better than I do.

SIMONE VAGNOZZI: If we have to speak about the parents, the parents of Jannik are wonderful, really wonderful. Sometimes they come to the tournament that they are not speak one word about tennis. They just there. They enjoy the life of the tournament but not, never come to us and say, Oh, you know, the serve, volley, the breakpoint. And right now it's not easy to find some kind of family, because with YouTube, everyone is a coach. Especially in Italy. (Laughter.)

So it's really, we are really lucky to have one family to back him like this. The education that Jannik have, you saw every day on court, no. The racquet never go down one time. It's really quiet.

I think for the Italian is a really good example to have.

DARREN CAHILL: What you see on Jannik on the court is incredibly respectful on the court, whether it be to the umpires or ballkids or linespeople, anybody around, the transport drivers, people at the restaurant. He's been brought up really well. He's got his feet on the ground. His parents are exactly the same as him. His dad's got that goofy smile that Jannik has. He's a chef. So we want him to come as much as possible because we eat really well when he's around.

They love it. A little bit sad they couldn't be here but it's such a long way to come from Italy for the semis or the final, and you never quite know. I think they believe in jinxing a little bit. They won't get on the plane and come and ruin the mojo of everything.

We believe, going back to your question, we believe in Jannik, we always have. He's a special young kid. Even the way he hits the ball, it just sounds special. When you hit the ball the way he does, when you want to improve the way he does, when you move the way he does, he's going to have success at some point.

As I said a couple of days ago, our job as coaches is to try to fast-track that as quickly as possible and get him to where he wants to go quickly so he can have a long window at the top of the game.

He's been doing well. He's absorbing everything and trying new things on the court, and he just wants to get better. I'm sure after this sinks in he won't settle. He'll never settle. He wants to get better.

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