

Roland Garros

Tuesday, 29 September 2020

Paris, France

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

N. DJOKOVIC/M. Ymer

6-0, 6-2, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. A question about 2016. When you won here in 2016, there are quite a few similarities that I have noticed to those seasons. You started with the Australian Open title, had a big win over Rafa. Big clay title in the buildup in a straight-sets first-round win. How does your start today compare to the way you felt back then in 2016 in terms of your confidence and form?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I don't like usually comparing the years, because every year is different obviously. You are a different person and different player, even though a lot of things seem similar, as you have pointed out, and few things that you could compare between 2020 and 2016.

But, you know, I am definitely very confident. I won every match that I played this year except obviously the one in New York where I was disqualified. Other than that, I won every match.

So, you know, if you keep on winning, obviously with every match that you win your confidence level raises a notch higher.

Obviously these conditions are different than what we are used to here in French Open. Everyone has been talking about it. The balls, the heavy clay, the cold weather. It all affects the play, of course.

But I think it's quite suitable to my style of the game. I actually enjoyed myself on the court today. I think I played really well. A few hiccups here and there, but I think generally the game is there.

I'm ready physically, mentally, emotionally to go deep in the tournament. Hopefully I can have another successful year here in Paris.

2016 was a dream come true. Obviously the only French Open title I have won in my career, and it was a very long anticipated title. For years I didn't manage to make that



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last step and fell in the last hurdle for probably two, three finals before that.

So it was very satisfying moment, the one that I definitely carry very deep in my heart. Hopefully this is the year again. I keep on coming back here hoping that it's going to be another success and that I'll be able to fight for the trophy, of course.

If that's not the case, if I don't have that kind of motivation and goal, I wouldn't be here, trust me. I have only the highest goals and I work towards them.

Q. Can you talk us a little bit more about the number of dropshots you made in the game. You said it would be the shot of the tournament.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I didn't say it's going to be shot of the tournament. I said it's going to be a very important shot in these conditions, because it's just so heavy and so slow. The tendency of the players obviously on clay is to go a bit further back to give themselves a little bit more time and space, because the ball bounces higher on clay than any other surface. But obviously now the bounce of the ball is significantly lower because of these conditions.

But anyway, nevertheless, I think it's a great variety shot, the dropshot. I think it's important tactically to have it and to use it at the right time so that you can keep your opponent always guessing what is the next shot.

I may have played too many today, I agree. Maybe I exceeded what I should have played. But I think it worked well in the moments when I needed to get the point I did.

And I thought that I kept my opponent today on the back foot constantly, because I felt comfortable to hit really any shot, being aggressive or coming to the net or mixing it up.

So I think it's more important than any other surface really on clay to actually have that variety.

Q. Can you clarify what happened in the third set in terms of I think there was a rowdy spectator. Obviously not many fans in Chatrier this year, but was there one spectator who was maybe shouting towards you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, that's my childhood friend. I



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sent him a kiss after I won the game. It was very nice to see him.

Q. Wondering whether New York at all was on your mind today? And do you think it was helpful to have a relatively stress-free match in the sense that you played very, very well and from the beginning you were in charge of that match today?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah. I have not had any traces of New York in my mind. I'm over it. Honestly forgot about it. I'm not thinking about it.

I thought I started off extremely well, winning 6-Love first set is the best possible way to start a Grand Slam. This is exactly what my intentions will be, trying to get off the blocks very strong with a good intensity. Obviously because players in the early rounds have nothing to lose, come out. And you could see there is quite a few surprises in the first round. You know, you have Medvedev out, some big players.

It tells a lot about these conditions, you know, and that it's very challenging for a top player especially coming in as a favorite and then needing to win and expected to win. I think that's why the opening rounds are crucial.

Q. I'd like to know since you always think about everything, strategically, sometimes do you choose to give long answers just because you respect very much our questions and journalists? Or you do it so you have less questions to answer at the end? You're clever, you know.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, thank you (smiling). I take that as a compliment. I try to give you material. I don't see you guys in person, so it's not easy to communicate this way, but I guess it is something we have to accept as kind of a temporary reality.

I don't know how to comprehend what you just asked me, because I don't know if you're satisfied or not satisfied with my answers. If you want me to keep them short, I will keep them short. You tell me, Ubi. You know you're one of my favorites. So tell me, what do you want?

Q. Sometimes short when it's not necessary to give a long answer. And sometimes, you know, you give us more options, you know. We can ask you more questions.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, you know, as I told you, you are one of my favorites, but I see that I am not one of your favorites. In your background I can see two familiar faces that definitely is not me there (smiling).

Q. Send me a great picture of yours.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It's hard to find, eh?

Q. I was sure you would go for perfection when you're playing. Have you ever played a perfect match? When would that be if you did? What would a perfect match be for you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I mean, a perfect match is 0-0, for sure. But I don't think that has ever happened. Maybe I did win once or twice earlier in my career 0-0.

But I think I played, from the big matches, you know, against Nadal in the finals of Australian Open in 2019, that's definitely one of probably the best matches on the big occasion against the biggest rival. Probably the best quality tennis I have played.

And another one that I would point out would probably be against Berdych in finals of Beijing. I think it was 6-Love, 6-2. I was 6-Love, 5-Love and match points and serving. That's also one of those matches that stays with you forever the way I played. And I was fortunate enough to have many great matches in my career, but I would probably think of those two at the moment.

Results-wise obviously perfect match is the clean sheet, so to say, 6-Love, 6-Love. That doesn't happen much, especially on the highest level.

But I think my performance against Nadal in the finals of Australian Open is as close as it gets to probably perfect performance.

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