

Roland Garros

Friday, 2 October 2020

Paris, France

Sebastian Korda

Press Conference

S. KORDA/P. Martinez Portero

6-4, 6-3, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. (Question regarding bet made with coach and trainer about swimming across the river in Prague if Sebastian made third round.)

SEBASTIAN KORDA: Yeah, no, we had a bet before the tournament even started. We went to dinner in the city in Prague. We were having dinner on the water. I was just looking out.

I was like, If I quallie and make third round, you guys got to swim across. My coach, my fitness trainer and Radek Stepanek, 100%. We shook on it. Yeah, so it's going to be an interesting bet. I can't wait for it.

Q. Do you have any expectation management or goal setting management from your father? Is there rivalry there, I can do this dad?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: No. I mean, my dad, he's incredibly supportive. But, yeah, no, my goal in life is to win two Grand Slams so I have one more than he has. That's what I'm going for.

Both my parents are incredible. With the way that everything is going right now, I mean, they're super proud. I can't be more grateful for them.

Q. You mentioned a fitness trainer Mike in an interview the other day. Would you give us his last name and also talk about what he's done for you? Why are you playing so well here now do you think? What has changed?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: His name is Marek Vseticek. He's a Czech fitness trainer, used to work with my dad, Radek Stepanek for all of his career, 17 years or something like that. Yeah, he's an unbelievable help.

I put in a lot of work, especially time off in the quarantine. Yeah, I mean, all the hard work that I put in last couple months is finally paying off.



ROLAND-GARROS

Q. You faced a lot of adversity for a straight-set win. It was really cold out there, the rain delay, Pedro kept you waiting for 11 minutes on the restart. What are you most proud of for having done today?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: Yeah, just staying calm. Even in the first couple games, he was playing really well. I was down a break. I just told myself just to hang in there.

One of my coaches from the USTA, Dean Goldfine, he always said to just weather the storm. That is all I just kept saying to myself. I was really happy with the way that I played after. I couldn't be prouder of myself just staying in there and keeping a positive mindset.

Q. When I asked your sisters about the possibility of potentially playing Rafa, they got so pumped for you, and you weren't even at that point yet. What has Rafa meant to you? What would you expect that experience to be like?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: Yeah, no, I'm praying that he wins. I mean, he's my biggest idol. He's one of the reasons I play tennis. Just watching him play, unbelievable competitor. Just from him I have the never-give-up mentality. Whenever I'm on court, I try to be like him.

Growing up, I named my cat Rafa after him. That says a lot about how much I love the guy (smiling).

Q. Jim Courier said when asked about you that you have very, very big potential. How does it make you feel when you hear somebody of that caliber talking about you? He met your father in the final 28 years ago here. Has your father ever shared with you particulars of that?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: I've seen pretty much a lot of his matches. We have a couple tapes at home. When I was a kid, I would watch those a lot.

It's awesome always to hear how big of a potential I have, especially from an unbelievable player like he was. Yeah, it's really encouraging.

What I've been saying to myself and everybody is just patience, keep building my body brick by brick. I mean, just keep going the way I'm doing it right now.

Q. You mentioned the trainer who worked with you. You look from afar like you filled out a little bit. Is



... when all is said, we're done.®

that the case? Have you put on some muscle and some weight? How does that affect you in a match on the court?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: Yeah, I mean, before the pandemic and everything, I was playing some really good tennis. It was kind of frustrating to have everything just stop. I mean, I just kind of put my head down and said, You know what, this is what's happening right now, I can't change anything about it.

I really just tried to dial in and be super positive, just kept telling myself to keep going. My fitness trainer did an unbelievable job with me. We were communicating every day. He wasn't able to come to Bradenton to train with me. But, yeah, we were in contact every day.

I'm super proud of myself. I mean, I was doing everything all by myself. The work is showing right now. I'm incredibly happy for it.

Q. Is there a way you could explain in which that helps you in the course of a match?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: Just like the self-belief that I have in myself. I know that I won't have to worry about my body giving up on me because I know I put in the hard work. The only thing I have to do is just play better than my opponent, win the final point after that. That's the only thing I have to worry about.

Q. You spoke about your rivalry with your dad. What about with your sister Nelly? She's obviously doing amazing things on the golf tour.

SEBASTIAN KORDA: Yeah, no, she's my best friend. She's two years older than me. We spent a lot of time together growing up. She's my best friend. She's incredibly supportive. She's having a really good year. She was super close to winning her first major this year. I was watching it at like 12:30, 1 in the morning in Prague. I think my heart rate at the time was 87 or something like that. I have a picture from it. I was just completely stressed out.

Yeah, my sisters are both amazing. Really grateful for them.

Q. Would you banter who is doing better or is that not the kind of relationship?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: No, no, definitely not. I mean, whenever we're together we're having a good time, yeah. We don't really get competitive with each other much.

Q. Could you speak to the atmosphere today, how it compared to your final in the juniors in Australia two years ago, and whether in some ways maybe the lack of atmosphere may help or hurt you?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: As in the fans or...

Q. Sort of almost like a practice session. There were maybe a dozen people watching you at the beginning.

SEBASTIAN KORDA: It's definitely not easy. I mean, it is what it is. We can't really do anything about it.

We're having the tournament right now. It's an unbelievable achievement by the tournament. I mean, I think all the players are super grateful just to be here, just to be able to have a chance to play.

Q. There were nine players on the men's side in the last 32, of which you and Pedro were among, that were outside the top 100. There seems to be something about this atmosphere that is perhaps helping the players other than the top players. Do you have any explanation?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: I think maybe coming from quallies we had a couple matches already under our belts here. I mean, speaking of myself, I mean, I was pretty confident by passing through quallies. I mean, I don't think many people in the main draw actually played that many matches unless they had a good week in Rome or Hamburg.

Yeah, just playing matches was probably the key this week.

Q. Back to Rafa. You traveled with Radek when your dad was with him. I'm sure you saw him all the time from a young age. How do you put that to the side if you do play him because you still want to go out and win the match?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: Yeah, for sure. It won't be easy. I mean, I'll be the happiest person on planet earth if I do get to play him. I'm really looking forward to it. I'm really hoping it happens.

Q. Your father said once, I don't remember what the answer is, as to why your sisters went to golf and you went to tennis. What is your golf like? What is Jessica and Nelly's tennis like?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: I think my oldest sister Jessica, she didn't really like sweating growing up. So tennis wasn't the ideal sport for her. Yeah, she fell in love with golf. Of course, my sister watching my sister Jessie play, she just wanted to be like her. She followed in her footsteps.

They'd be both unbelievable tennis players. Whenever they get on court, they got some nice-looking strokes. No, they'd be some pretty good tennis players.

As for myself and golf, I played a lot of golf during the time at home. I don't know, probably like a three or two handicap. I golfed a lot my whole life. My dad is a club champion where we live. So, yeah, we're all pretty good golfers.

Q. Maybe you weren't joking about wanting to improve on your dad's record of having one Grand Slam, you want at least two. You've already improved on your mom at Roland Garros. She maybe never made it past the third round, now you have. What influence did your mother have on your career as also a professional tennis player?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: Yeah, when I switched over to tennis from hockey, my dad was traveling with my sister because she just made it onto -- I think she was in her last year of juniors or first year of professional. My dad was traveling with her, caddying for her.

I was playing tennis with my mom. She's probably one of the biggest influences that I have. The way my strokes are and everything is because she's the one that kind of tuned it that way.

Yeah, no, we spent a lot of time on court together when I was a kid. Probably more than with my dad.

Q. What age did you make that transition from hockey to tennis?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: I think when I was 10 and a half, 11, yeah. That's when I decided to give up hockey for tennis.

Q. Why did that happen?

SEBASTIAN KORDA: I went to the US Open with my dad and Radek Stepanek in 2009. He made round of 16 I think. He played Djokovic on Ashe 10:30 at night, totally packed. I thought it was the coolest thing. Went home, came back the next year and said, This is exactly what I want to do. The rest is history.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports