

Roland Garros

Saturday, 3 October 2020

Paris, France

Ons Jabeur

Press Conference

O. JABEUR/A. Sabalenka

7-6, 6-2, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What is on the mask?

ONS JABEUR: It's Tsitsipas. I asked for it. He was like, No way you're going to wear it.

Of course, I'm going to wear it.

I'm Team Tsitsipas.

Q. Are there any drawings of you are available at that site?

ONS JABEUR: No. It's only him. Actually stole it from the team. (Smiling.)

Q. What was the key to this match?

ONS JABEUR: Yeah, well, tough, tough match. I mean, she really hits hard. She's such an aggressive player. Actually she didn't give me a lot of opportunities, especially in the second set.

I mean, I was serving for the set, but I don't know what happened in there. Actually she was playing really good. To be honest, I had no regrets losing that game.

But then I had to still do a lot of slices, dropshots, mix it up. I know that could bother her a lot. I'm so happy that that game really worked today.

Q. Is it hard for you at all to do all the dropshots in the pressure moments or is that something you've learned to do?

ONS JABEUR: Yeah, well, before I used to do it to get rid of the point because I know it's going to be over. I've learned to try to have a good momentum to do the dropshot now because sometimes when I'm stressed, I really miss it. Of course, I lose confidence in doing it.

But I think today was pretty good. Even the momentum doing the dropshots, sometimes I just not try to win it



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right away, but to make the point easier for me which helped me a few times.

I mean, I think the slice really helped me today, especially on the backhand, it kind of bothered her. I was kind of sliding everywhere, which was really good.

Q. In terms of being able to manage this tournament as normally as possible, stay calm to get the best result of your career, what has been kind of the secret for you?

ONS JABEUR: Well, today was staying calm, to be honest. She was screaming, like fighting every point, screaming in some very important points. Especially when she got back at 6-6.

For me, I wanted to stay calm because I had no reason to be angry. I think that helped me a lot today.

In the other matches I just wanted to play my game, like really enjoy on clay. Today obviously the match was even harder. Tomorrow it's going to be also. I mean, after tomorrow is also going to be harder.

I like how I play. I like how I mix it up. Obviously I'm going to continue doing that. Hope the dropshot will always help me.

Q. Your team is very vocal, and we can hear them as well. In this environment I have to imagine that could be a double-edged sword, sometimes really great, and I've seen players telling their boxes to be quiet. How do you manage that?

ONS JABEUR: I like when they scream. I think they know when I want them to scream, when I want them to be calm. I think they're doing a really good job. Everyone was hearing them on the TV screaming, asking me who was that.

I like working with my team right now. We have really good, like, conversations after the match. I am talking more because I'm not usually the type to talk more about tennis outside the court. When I lose, they don't blame me right away. They blame themselves. I do the same, I blame them also, which is good (laughter).

No, we really have a good team now. We are trying to have good results.

Q. You talked earlier in the year of having a goal of

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wanting to be top 20. You missed five, six months of the season. How satisfied are you that you've delivered this great year that you wanted? This trajectory, if there was a full season, you almost certainly would have gotten top 20. How does it feel, with context, to have achieved this goal in some way?

ONS JABEUR: I know that I had to, like, change my mindset, like I said before. I put in my head if I want to be in top 20, I just have to believe in it. Before sometimes maybe I gave up too early. Even like today at 5-1, probably the old me would have gave up the tiebreak.

I mean, I think I'm progressing, I'm growing up as a person. It's helping me be better player on court. I mean, I know maybe I'm not going to be maybe top 20 this year, but the dream will continue for the next year. Or maybe if I win here, I don't know...

Yeah, let's see. To be honest, I still have the same goal, the same ranking for me. I also wanted to qualify for the WTA Finals, but there is no WTA Finals, so yeah. It's a very bad coincidence for me this year. I think I'm going to keep fighting and keep being positive. It's going really well, so no stress for me.

Q. What kind of impact does your progress make back home in Tunisia? You said it's all football, football, football in Tunisia, that's the main sport. Will this have a big impact in the media, sports fans back home?

ONS JABEUR: I mean, the fans, people, they are really encouraging me a lot. Media, I'm not sure. I mean, the most important thing for me is having Tunisian people supporting me all the time. I know it would have been different if we could have spectators here. I'm really happy that they're supporting me.

I can obviously read the messages on social media. That's really important for me. Also I know they expecting me to be and go as far as I can in this tournament. I'm really trying to keep up, represent really good Tunisia.

Q. If you make the final, you'll be comfortably top 20. Your next opponent, either Muguruza or Danielle Collins. Your thought on each of those matchups.

ONS JABEUR: I mean, I played against Muguruza in Hobart this year. It was kind of a tough match. If I play her, then I'm probably going for my revenge. Maybe playing on clay will be better for me. I like the way I'm playing right now, mix it up, doing all the stuff I want to do.

Collins, I never played against her. She's a tough player.

Let's see. I hope they play for five hours and get tired, and I'm going to be relaxing right now.

Q. This kind of clay, do you think it's even better for your game, the dropshots, everything?

ONS JABEUR: Yeah, yeah. Actually the dropshot goes really well because there is no high bounce. The ball is heavy. Even if I don't do a really good dropshot, it's going to give me the opportunity to go ahead in the point, which helps a lot. Sometimes I do dropshot when they don't expect it, which is also good for me.

But obviously everybody knows that I do dropshots, so it's not easy at the same time to do it. That's why I try to slice long, sometimes mix it up short.

Q. When you hit those pretty spectacular dropshots, I notice you never really celebrate. Today you did the little hop hoping it would clear the net. Why don't you celebrate those?

ONS JABEUR: Actually today was special because I didn't want to, like, scream or do, Wow. She was really screaming instead of me today. I thought if I was screaming with her, probably is going to make me angry or make her angry. I don't know, if she's angry she plays much better.

I tried to stay calm so I don't show it's a big deal for me. Inside, trust me, I was screaming a lot. I didn't want to also make it a big deal. Wow, what a great dropshot, then not make any.

I wanted to be calm and do as much as I can of those kind of shots.

Q. When you play you don't make hardly any noise when you hit the ball. Sabalenka today was making a lot of noise, especially towards the end. Do you find it off putting? Do you think girls kind of use that as a tactic, upping the decibels?

ONS JABEUR: Obviously she screams because it's one of her routines she does. I'm pretty sure that it helps her to be her on the court.

For me, I was not screaming as loud as her. I was kind of like making a sound with the ball. Maybe sometimes I scream harder when I need to.

But probably today was special. I didn't want to do it a lot because I just wanted to stay calm. For me it was kind of a tactic to do that because I needed really to stay calm, not get into the game of both of us screaming and getting angry.

I just wanted to maintain calm, be maybe the master on the court.

