

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

N. DJOKOVIC/T. Sandgren

6-2, 6-4, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What are your thoughts on today? Looked pretty straightforward, but must have been difficult playing there with nobody around to cheer you on.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I had a great support in Belgrade last week, and I was kind of filled with a good vibe, good energy from those matches that I played in front of a crowd. So I didn't mind playing in front of an empty stadium tonight. But hopefully all the other matches that I'm going to play in this tournament are going to have crowd on the stands, because, you know, they are one of the biggest reasons why I keep on competing in professional tennis.

So it was strange, honestly, but I'm also honored to be the first men's match, night session, history of this tournament, of this court.

I thought I played really well. Moved really well. Just overall from Rome tournament, later stages of Rome tournament until now, I'm just finding my groove on the court, striking the ball well. Very pleased with the way I am feeling and playing on the court.

So I'm going to try to keep that up. Obviously it's a long shot. It's a long tournament. But I'll take it match by match. And physically I'm also fit. I'm motivated as anybody.

Q. First of all, I have to excuse myself. I didn't get a question yesterday, so if you allow me to ask a topic because I have a deadline, regarding the PTPA, since March I heard that there were two big meetings including you and two experts to help to make the PTPA better. I ask myself if you could allow me to speak about it, elaborate a little bit, how is the status quo with the PTPA and ATP at the moment. Sorry I ask this in the late evening. Sorry.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, no problem. Thank you for your kindness.



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There were not two meetings. There were much more meetings than two actually in the last several months. We did reach out to all the players in the top 500, top 350 singles, top 150 doubles on the men's side, and we also are reaching out to the female tennis players. Things are going a little bit slower with the women's side.

But we are progressing. We are moving forward. We have some concrete things actually on the table right now. We have a couple of very wealthy and influential people, successful people in business that are tennis fans that are from United States and that are behind us, supporting us financially, and also with their advices and consultations.

They are participating in every conference call that we have. They are helping us create the structure and the foundation of PTPA that will be exactly what we imagine it to be, the association that will represent the players' rights as best as possible.

We did have a few conversations with ATP, but until we set everything up, I think in terms of structure of and the legislation of PTPA, there is no reason to extend the talks with ATP for the moment, because we are constructing everything.

So when we are ready, we will reach out and try to find a mutual language and common ground with everyone.

As I mentioned before, PTPA, as a players organization, needs to co-exist in the tennis ecosystem with the ATP, WTA, and all the other entities in sports and all the other institutions.

It's inevitable, now it's happening, and, you know, we've had so far over 75%, if I'm not mistaken, reaching 80% of the support from the 500 players on the men's side that I mentioned; so top 350 singles, top 150 doubles. We have over 75% of them that are supporting us that have signed the document and agreed to be part of PTPA.

So that's great news. As I said, we are moving forward, and let's see what is going to happen in the next couple months, but we will have definitely some changes and news to talk to you about.

Q. We have already had two incredible story lines in this tennis tournament. I wanted to ask you, you have been playing the game since you were a young boy. So many ups, so many downs, so many



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challenges. A very general question, but what has this game primarily taught you? What are the lessons of the sport of tennis?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I must say I'm very grateful to be able to be so successful in the sport that I really love and that I fell in love with when I was four years old, very young boy.

I was fortunate really to be supported and guided by some very important people other than my parents that are very knowledgeable about tennis, like my tennis father, Niki Pilic, or my tennis mother, as I like to call them, Jelena Gencic, that have helped me establish myself as an athlete on and off the court, and they have had support of my parents to actually affect my development and my upbringing, not just on the court but off the court, as well.

So that was a great influence and guidance from them that helped me to reach these heights. So I'm very grateful for everything that I am experiencing because of this sport.

It's an individual sport, so it's a big challenge because you have to take the responsibilities for your deeds and for all the actions in your own hands. So, you know, regardless of the amount of people that you have around you, you still have to do your job by yourself. You cannot rely on the court or anybody else but yourself.

Sure, of course, it's a team effort because of the coaches and physiotherapists and fitness coaches that bring you into the state where you're ready and able to perform your best, but then in the end of the day you're by yourself, which has its good sides and also its very challenging sides.

But I think it's a wonderful sport. It's a very global sport recognized around the world, popular, followed by many people. We're just blessed. You know, I'm still in love with it, and I still am very motivated to compete.

Traveling is a little bit tough these days, particularly with all these restrictions and not seeing my family for quite a bit. But, you know, nevertheless I have to see things on a positive side, and there are many positives.

Q. I'd like to know if you think that the reaction that the four slams had towards what Osaka said and withdraw and so on, if in your opinion was too strong, you would have been more diplomatic, or if it was right to do what they did more or less and to say, Look, you cannot decide without telling us before that you don't want to participate to any press conference, and if you do it, you'll be fined and you'll be sanctioned and so and so and so.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, look, the Grand Slams are

protecting themselves and their own business. Of course they are going to follow the rules and they are going to, you know, make sure that you are complying. Otherwise you'll be paying fines and getting sanctioned. It's not surprising to me that that was their reaction.

I mean, you know, because we are kind of used to this environment and this kind of principles of us doing interviews after every match and getting to answer questions majorly that are quite similar.

But it's part of our sport. It's part of what we do. The media is important, without a doubt. You know, it's allowing us to have the platform to communicate with our fans, but in a more traditional way. It used to be the only way how we can reach out to our fans, right, in the last five years or maybe ten years's it's not the case anymore. We have our own platforms, our own social media accounts through which we are able to communicate directly with fans.

Naomi, she's very young and she grew up with obviously with social media and ability to speak out through her channels. Look, I can understand her very well, and I empathize with her, because I was on the wrong edge of the sword in my career many times with media (smiling). I know how it feels.

I support her. I think she was very brave to do that. I'm really sorry that she is going through painful times and suffering mentally, is what I have heard. I haven't spoken to her. But it seems like she has been struggling. I wish her all the best. I hope she recovers. She's very important player and brand for and person for our sport.

So we need to have her back. This was, I must say, very bold decision from her side. But she knows how she feels best. If she needs to take time and reflect and just recharge, you know, that's what she needed to do, and I respect it fully.

I hope that she'll come back stronger.

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