

# Roland Garros

Thursday, 26 May 2022

Paris, France

## Gilles Simon

### Press Conference

G. SIMON/S. Johnson

7-5, 6-1, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Can you compare the emotions tonight to those that you felt on Simonne Mathieu late when you beat Carreno.

GILLES SIMON: Well, it was a different feeling. I think every match is different. The first round was really special. It was kind of a unique atmosphere, and that is maybe only possible when you play that late with fans that are just crazy enough to stay, to watch it until the end. So it was a very, very special moment.

Today, on the center court, also because of the match, that was different. I don't know. I had a lot of stress. It was harder for me to communicate with the crowd. I could feel they were there from the start, ready, ready to help me, but I was more nervous, more impatient.

Even sometimes, I felt like sometimes they were even bothering me sometimes between first and second serve. I felt like, Come on, last French Open, man, you are so lucky to be there, enjoy, enjoy everything, enjoy every minute.

Yeah, I had less energy. I was in control of the match for two sets and a half, and I just wanted to keep that, until the end was like no energy at all, and unfortunately the end of the match was really demanding. It was really hard mentally to finish it.

But at that moment I used the crowd again, and then we had very good relation again on the court, and it was a great feeling.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

**Q. Just wondering, this has obviously not been the easiest season for you, before this tournament. Yet you have come here and obviously played extremely well to reach the third round. Why do you think you have been able to unlock it here in your last French Open?**

GILLES SIMON: I mean, it's a difficult season, but the worst one was the last one. Yeah, it's difficult on the



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court since long now. I would say since COVID, basically.

Yes, it's really difficult. I decided that it was the last one, because that's how I feel it. That's how I feel it in my mind. That's how I feel it in my body. That's just I'm sure about it 100%, there is no reason that can make me change my opinion on that.

Maybe because of that and with the perspective, you know, just to give 100% of what you have left for six months. Maybe also mentally, you know, the charge is a bit lower because you know it's over, it's more simple. I feel lighter, you know, in my head. So maybe that's why it helps me to play this tennis here.

**Q. What did you actually want from this tournament before you started? I know you said, you know, after your first-round match that you weren't so confident about winning it. What did you want from this tournament?**

GILLES SIMON: Well, I was really worried before the tournament, because as you mentioned, the results were not great before the tournament. It's not like you come full of confidence and ready to play and fight against anyone.

Plus you see your draw, you play against Pablo. Five sets on clay. Okay. Let's go (smiling).

No, I just wanted to enjoy it one more time. I really thought it would be one match, actually. You can trust me on this. I was sure I would lose this first round.

But I wanted to enjoy it. I wanted to be good enough. I wanted to make a decent performance. I wanted to have a match, to have like rallies. I wanted, yeah, a good match, you know. Last French Open, good feelings.

It's not my last match anyway when I lose here. It's not like Jo, it's a different feeling. It's just my last French Open and I want to enjoy it, and to enjoy it, you need to perform.

So I had a very nice surprise that I was able to perform much better than expected. Good enough to beat a player like Pablo in the first round and like Stevie now. So I have one chance. One more match, at least one more match to play, maybe again after, but one more match against Marin. It's going to be long, hard, as every

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time.

But I'm really happy to have the chance to come back in front of the crowd one more time.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

**Q. Have you had such an osmosis with an audience at Roland Garros? How do you feel about it?**

GILLES SIMON: The osmosis of today, yes. Once or twice I have had very good matches because I played a lot of Roland Garros. So two or three times the crowd was great. But most of all, it's my fault today, but there were also matches where I was more available for the crowd than today.

Today I was really in a management of my effort. I started the match very tensed. It started not so well, so I was Love-3 after a double break, you feel it's going to be very complicated, and it took a lot of time for me to feel well.

When I started dominating and turned the match over and it was more going my direction, I wanted to win. I didn't want anyone to bother me. I even wanted to say, Okay, to the crowd, don't bother me, I'm winning. Just let me win and we will move to something else.

That's why today my mental attitude was different with respect to the crowd.

And honestly, the atmosphere of the first round was so surrealistic. It was so incredible. The crowd was less numerous. It was like half of the Simonne Mathieu. So it was incredible. Every match is different, anyway.

But today I'm very happy about my performance. I really felt that the crowd was present. More and more, it's something that I feel in a general way.

I didn't have the chance to take advantage of that before, but matches where I had at Bercy or the previous Roland Garros, and great atmospheres for French players at Bercy that we are not used to having here.

Sometimes it's even bothering, and people say, it was a bit too much. I want to tell them, you can't realize how we get shouted at in other countries when we play over there. For example, when I played Kyrgios in Australia, the audience shouts at you with insults during the entire match. I even told the umpire, and he said, I can't evacuate the whole stadium. And I said, Okay, I agree. So that's how things happen.

Here it's totally different. The audience is very respectful, but it's more fired up, more ready to push forward together, and it's very pleasant.

And of course it turns matches around, because it's important. But for a player like myself who has played against crowds in Argentina for Davis Cup, for instance, here it's not Argentina at all.

So I see Franck in the first row who certainly remembers the first match against Massu, and it's not the same story. You're not serving your second ball serve.

It's great. Unfortunately today, I didn't have enough mental energy to spend with the crowd. I was very concentrated. I had the match within my grasp, I wanted to win it as fast as possible and not lose my bearings with the crowd that would be too supportive with an ola and a wave. And I felt they were behind me and it was really, really pleasant.

**Q. Regarding my colleague's question and the atmosphere of this first round on the Simonne Mathieu crowd, we had the impression there are crazy matches taking place there. Do you notice specific features of this court that could explain the craziness there and what happened for your match on Tuesday evening?**

GILLES SIMON: I find this court fantastic, but each player has a different feeling. For me, I'm always asked which court I prefer, and I always say the Philippe Chatrier and Simonne Mathieu and not Suzanne Lenglen. But someone else would like to play first on Suzanne Lenglen. So everyone has their preferences, favorite court, et cetera.

But there is a proximity that we could have on other courts. I had a beautiful atmosphere on Court No. 14. It's a beautiful court, and some players love Court No. 1. They like this arena aspect. I didn't like it. There was an echo, I didn't appreciate it.

But here it was the context. You played at night and started very late.

But of course now we have night sessions, but the rest of the stadium who still has energy after having come at 11:00 came to see me, and it was fantastic.

It happened like this. But the crowd was present right from the start. The match started well. We were in osmosis during the entire match. Even when I went down in the third and fourth sets, spark was lacking, and then it sparked back. And then it was fantastic.

**Q. Due to the fact that you have no pressure and you play well and you think you must play well again, and the fact that you have lived an incredible evening, are you not afraid that things will become more normal and less good for your next match?**

GILLES SIMON: Not at all. It's just that unfortunately I

know what it requires from me to recover from such a match, and it's hard.

Today I felt tiredness, my eyes were a bit vague. But I did a beautiful performance. I controlled my opponent once I was able to launch myself in the match. And I always have concerns, because a match can turn around fast.

If he wins the third, it's going to begin again. You have to win the match when you can. So I had a few opportunities at the beginning of the third. I broke him, then I got debroken. I was able to rebreak him, but I noticed that everything was becoming harder. I was less aggressive and dominating the rallies, and I was a bit shaken. So I was concerned.

When you are concerned, you're a bit less available for the rest. You try to focus on your own things. You take less advantage of the external factors.

So I wanted to win and maybe the next match will be totally crazy. We will see what happens. But it's not automatic, and I thank them. You feel that the crowd is ready, that they are eager to support you, and you must be good, because you started so you're Love-3, after double break you are not winning one point. The audience can do nothing to help you.

So there is a performance that has to be delivered, I have to deliver it, and I'm concerned that I was not able to deliver it every time every day, otherwise I wouldn't be here.

**Q. You will stop because your body tells you to stop after the repetition of matches. Here you played two great matches. How do you feel physically after these two matches and before the third one?**

GILLES SIMON: I don't know. Recovery was complicated, especially when you end very late you are not able to recover immediately after the match, because the most important thing then is to sleep. So it leaves less time to recover.

Yesterday I had the doubles with Hugo and it was difficult for us because we didn't even see the balls and we had to play. It enabled us to see in what condition we were, and we were not in a good state, a good condition, neither of us.

That's what was worrying because there is a mixture of excitement and concerns. That's what summarizes my last Roland Garros; concerns of physical aspects, recovering of playing, being able to sustain efforts for three, four, five sets, but excitement because I had the chance of having a first fantastic match and then the second one, and now have the chance of playing a third match.

It's my last Roland Garros and I want to enjoy it to the fullest. I try to find the right balance.

**Q. You said you were going to stop at the end of the year so maybe you will hope to finish Bercy with a real crowd, not anonymously. But whatever happens against Marin and maybe later during the tournament, could you not stop after something magnificent like this Roland Garros?**

GILLES SIMON: Yes and no. When I made my decision, of course nothing compares to Roland Garros, but there were tournaments I wanted to play. For instance, I wanted to play once again on grass. It seems irrelevant and unclear. But I really wanted to play again on grass. Whatever happens I will want to play on grass. Maybe only one first round.

There are other places I'd like to go back to in my personal history. My children, very young, they came to see me in tournaments very often. We saw them less often recently, because they go to school. There are tournaments where I want to go as a family.

Here they had the great opportunity to see the matches here at Roland Garros, and I'm very proud and happy. But I wanted also before I stop, when I stop, to have them next to me. Because if I play on Monday during the day, my kids will be at school, my wife will be working. So it's silly, but I wanted to do a few things with them.

When I stop, I really want to be 100% certain that I did everything I had to do, even small things. So I said, Okay, if you want to play once more on grass, go and play once more on grass. If you want to play one last time US Open, because my wife, it was my wife's favorite tournament, let's go. If we want to play at Metz, because my two kids were born just before Metz, okay, I will go to play Metz.

Of course it's not Roland Garros, especially if I play on a Tuesday at 11:00 a.m. But there are things you want to do for the audience, other things you want to do personally, because being a tennis player is a personal journey.

When I'm asked what is your favorite memory, I say it's too difficult with 17 years, because there are pure performance memories. Others that are memories of emotional aspects, and I don't want to prioritize one over the other.

So many memories. I just want to finish my career playing where I want to play.

**Q. (Question off microphone.)**

GILLES SIMON: I dream of finishing and stopping at

Bercy, but it's not even in my hands. Even in Metz, I have a ranking. I need a wildcard I need to play. If I have it, fantastic. If I don't, too bad.

Right now I'm trying not to protect myself too much. I want to make the most and enjoy this last Roland Garros to the fullest, and I will try to do it till the end.

**Q. Regarding Leolia Jeanjean, I'm told when she was younger, you were her idol. You were playing in the service box. What do you remember of that?**

GILLES SIMON: Yes, her and Kristina, had one on one side, the other on the other side. Indeed, I hadn't seen Leolia for a long time. I'm very happy for her. I saw her match today. Everything went very well this morning. She played perfectly. She made her opponent move.

And Karolina is often keen on running around, and Leolia did beautiful dropshots and made her move. Often we say French tennis is not going well. We don't have any seeded players. So let's be happy when things happen positively, so we are all happy that she's made it through to the third round.

When we see, in the ladies, we have the impression that the seeded players are losing, that the draw is open, and you look at her draw, and you say, Oh, maybe she has a chance, go for it.

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