

Roland Garros

Saturday, 28 May 2022

Paris, France

Gilles Simon

Press Conference

M. CILIC/G. Simon

6-0, 6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: (Question about the match off microphone.)

GILLES SIMON: Well, it was a very difficult match with a very tough opponent. Marin played fantastic tennis from the start until the end. Gave me no solutions, no options. It was also harder on my body today. So, yeah, it was very complicated to score anything.

I feel every point was super hard to win. I hoped I could do better than this, but unfortunately it's a three-set straight loss, well-deserved for him. But that's how it is.

In the end, it's not a big problem. Of course I would like to -- would have been great to play a fantastic match with him, as we played hopefully in the past, to enjoy even more the atmosphere and this last experience.

But overall, I just feel really lucky that I had the chance to play three matches here. I feel also very lucky to play my last match here against someone that I admire a lot, because Marin is not only a fantastic player for me. He's just a super-good man and kind of player who should have won the sportsmanship trophy like every year.

I never heard him complain about anything. He's amazing. He has a huge career, one slam, I think, two other final, I think, maybe three, I don't know, one or two Davis Cup, a 1000.

Yeah, he's a very nice guy, very good player, and I think it's a chance to play him for my last match here. I'm very happy that it was against him.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. During your speech, I think you said in French that you were taking some pills and stuff to get on court. What has it taken for you to kind of maintain your career so long physically?

GILLES SIMON: Well, it's difficult, you know. The guys, especially today, physically I see just the guys are like beasts. You know, they are strong, they are tall, they are



ROLAND-GARROS

like moving fast, they are enduring, they are everything.

So it's really demanding for me to be on this level. You know, I'm not shaped in the same way than Felix, let's say, for example. So you can imagine when Felix hits a forehand full power, for me it's hard to counter (smiling).

I feel my body is on the limit. It's difficult to feel 100% every day, and today was obviously a very bad day for me. Too many pains in the body. A player which is just too good, you know, he's just hitting every zone, he's playing deep. Then once you are back he opens the court and then you play it and he's finishing there.

You feel like you will have to give and run and hit full power on everything. Today, no, I have too many pains, I cannot hold it. To maybe have a chance, you know, it's not even that you're gonna win it. It's just to have a chance to somehow come back in the match.

So that's how it is. I did everything I could for long. And as I said, it's helping me now to have a limit in my head, to know that I would just do my best for six more months, no matter what it is, no matter how painful it is on the court, just go, put everything I have left, and done. That's it. That's the only thing I can do.

Q. Some people say that you kind of got everything out of your career, I guess, given those physical differences with some players. Do you view your career like that or not?

GILLES SIMON: I don't know if it's important really. For me, I just do as good as I can, and I just give my best.

Obviously, I mean, if you are just running statistics, you can see that player that is 190 and, I don't know, 80 kilo has more chance to win a slam. The guys that are 2 meter tall, in the end it's more difficult for them also in five sets.

For the players that are 180 and 70 kilos, it's a bit harder, players like me, David Goffin, or Kei Nishikori I think was one of the closest ones to win the slam in this range.

It's just harder but not impossible. In the end, anyway, you're born like this, it's just nature, nothing you can do.

So I have some very, very good and strong abilities also physically. I was super enduring, I was super powerful, I have a very good ratio for my body. But it's hard.

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And today I can feel it when I play someone like Marin that is playing very good tennis, hitting every zone, on the serve, from the return, he takes advantage every time. It's really difficult to counter him. Again, that's, anyway, or maybe I can ask to serve one meter in front, but I'm not sure if they are going to allow me (smiling).

That's it. You fight with what you have. That's tennis. That's how it is. All the players have the chance to be on the super-high level. Still have Dieguito here. Amazing. Yeah, I cannot complain.

Q. Congratulations for an amazing career. I don't know if you know, but your victory against Ljubicic in Bercy when you were injured is praised as an incredible example of sports psychology among many experts in that area. So I don't know if you're aware of that. Since you have worked a lot with Serbian coaches and staff, would you have a special message at this moment for your Serbian fans, in Serbian. Thank you.

GILLES SIMON: Well, I think two things. I remember this match. Obviously was a match where I couldn't move anymore and for the first time in my life I decided to play some dropshots, and I'm really bad at it, you can trust me on that. Lucky it worked. It worked and I was really surprised to have that much effect on Ivan, which is a fantastic player, which is so strong mentally, and nobody holding these kind of situation. You know, it's hard to affect him.

But for us playing in Bercy, it's always a special atmosphere. Also the crowd can be tough for the opponent. Even someone like Ivan on this match lost it a little bit. He really had the match in hand, and somehow I survived. I remember I was lucky.

On the other part I didn't know it was kind of reference (smiling). Especially in Serbia when you have a player which is mentally I think, I think mentally he's maybe the strongest guy I have ever seen. So I think you have a very good example, much better than myself. And you should use him more than me.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

Q. On the court you talked about lots of frustrations and big happiness. When would you say being frustrated was something you felt more than being happy?

GILLES SIMON: For me, it's a simple mechanism. When you reach Roland Garros, you want to play well. You want to do well.

People always tend to believe that, and this is what you write, by the way, and it has nothing to do with that, is

that it's because people expect a lot from you. There is not a lot of expectations on the French players.

No, I know there is no expectations on me. Nobody is waiting for me at Roland Garros or the French Open, nobody this morning woke up and said, Oh, maybe Gilles Simon is going to win Roland Garros this year. Let's go for it. No, it's not that type of pressure. It's the pressure I put on myself because I want to play well from the word go.

My first Roland Garros, my first wildcard. If it's the first round people say, You've gone through the first round. But you do not want to play for the first round. You want to be good and better than anyone else.

That's something that you feel. This thing that you feel can work in either way. That is, either it's okay, everything goes on smoothly, and you feel the strength that is building in you, developing you, something very positive, and you know that the crowd is here to support you.

And then there are emotions here that you will feel nowhere else, because this is it. There is a fine chemistry. There is something happening. Or it's the other way around. You want to do things well, nothing works. You are totally frozen, and then the points go by, 2-0, 3-0. For us it's simpler than for the girls, because there is three sets. So you have more time to be in your match.

But then, you go through the match, you have started very ambitious, you say, Oh, I feel good, I'm ready for that.

For instance, Caruso (phonetic) the other day, second round, I felt really good. I thought, this one is good. I think it was 2, 1, and 4. Well, nothing works. And you know that. You try things during the match, and at the end you are so angry.

You feel, Oh, I felt really good, I had no pain, I was really good, it was the second round, everything was open. And then you have the impression that you totally missed your match.

Roland is either/or. You have to focus on the present, have to focus on each match. Sometimes you play a good match and you think the second one is going to be cool. No way.

Sometimes it's the other way around. Before the first round, there is a lot of pressure on you. You say, Oh, no, I'm so frightened. I have the impression I can't beat anybody. Then it goes on nicely.

So it's tough. But you learn a lot. You learn a lot about yourself. You know and learn how to manage these

things. That's part of experience.

But I don't think that any of the French players could say that it's been one way only or the other way only. All of us have had good moments and bad moments. It's part of life.

Q. Several weeks ago or a month ago, what would you have said had people told you that you would reach round No. 3? Recently you said that you played tennis in a way you had not played before or for a while. Can you tell us about the recent weeks and what's happened in the recent weeks.

GILLES SIMON: Well, recently, I asked for a wildcard first, and you never know if you're going to get the wildcard or not. It was a bit of a complicated year for that. It's not something you can control.

There is always something I like about tennis is that usually you get your ranking and you play. It's based on the fact that you deserve it.

But in this, well, this time, I had no control. I know what it means, five sets on clay, physically. When I was in good form, I was worried, because this surface requires a lot of effort from me.

I know that since I'm not a powerful player, I can feel it. I have to hit harder. I have to be fully engaged. It's not just about timing, you see. Far from that.

So with stress and the rest, you can easily fall. When I was fit, I knew I could have cramps here more than anywhere else, and it could be really tough for me.

So with years, and I looked at my results, they were not that good, and there is the pace and rhythm, as well. If it's a three-setter on the challenger match, sometimes I could reach a quarterfinal and I had three matches to play, and the third one, no.

But that's worrying. That's why I decided to say it's my final year. This year I have a mountain of stress.

So next year is not going to be better in any way. So on clay, I learnt a lot this year. In the challengers, more than any time before, because these challenger matches, you have a lot of specialists, a lot more than on the tour. On the tour, you play the same players; hard, grass, clay. They change their game. Marin Cilic, what's he played differently today compared to a hard surface? Well, I wouldn't know what the answer is; you wouldn't either.

But with these challenger matches, as I was saying, look at these players, it's been three, four, five six years they have been playing on clay, only clay. So I've learned a lot.

Even tactically speaking, there are things that clicked. Yeah, it's never too late to learn. I felt even better in my tactics and my plans, what I wanted to do on clay. Better than any of these seasons I played before.

But Lyon, two wins, that was good for me. I was playing against the watch. And playing two matches just before the French Open was really good. But for me that was a miracle. It was so unlikely, but I'm very happy to have done that.

Q. I'd like to know if you are happy or sad today.

GILLES SIMON: No, I'm very happy, very happy. Frankly, no, I'm very happy. I did what I had to do.

I can't move my right hip, but never mind that. Maybe it should have been this way for the first round. So I feel very lucky. Well, of course I wanted to do better.

I did better in the past against Marin, but let's admit that he played a very good match. Because, you know, this is my last Roland, so there are emotions. And we talk a lot about this and not the game level, but look at his game level, that was amazing.

I think he made three mistakes, I think. Well, he didn't make enough mistakes, in any case.

No, I mean, frankly, he played incredibly well. This is what happened today. If I play against this type of strong opponent, I don't have the weapons. I no longer have the weapons to fight back.

We are back to the ranking and the results I had in the past weeks. There is no surprise for me. I'm not sad that something that was at the back of my head. As I said before, I had fears, ridiculous fears, I said, if it's the first round and if it's 6-Love, and 2-Love, it's not good. But this time it's a third round, so never mind that.

Q. I have two questions that have nothing to do with this. Two questions in a row. You reached the semis in the Masters. Your career is a good career. Would you say that as far as recognition is concerned, recognition is in proportion to your career? Second question, I saw that you played doubles with Hugo Gaston. Is it pure chance, or do you know him? Do you know each other? What are the tips you could give him? He's a bit like you.

GILLES SIMON: Doubles?

Q. No, I'm not talking about tips to play doubles. But you were talking about the strong service, et cetera. Hugo is not like this. He's a bit more like you. What can you do if you don't have big weapons to last and have a long career and to be physically and mentally resilient throughout the year?

GILLES SIMON: Well, to answer your first question, well, frankly, I'll be very open, I'll be kind but I'll be very open to you, I don't bother. I have never looked for recognition. I have always thought if I have some recognition, good; if I don't have any, I'll survive.

People talked a lot about this, because I'm in a generation of players who had a lot of aura, very charismatic in different styles, and each of us represent and embodies almost a persona or someone from a comic strip. That is Jo, Richard, Gael. In real life they don't exist, and when they are out of this room, you can't even see them.

No, very exceptional, each of them in their own way. I think, I don't know if it means something, but I'm more normal. Therefore, I'm in their shadow in a certain way. I feel good this way, because given my personality, this is not a problem at all.

Here again, I was on the courts. I tried to do my best. I tried to win as many matches as I could. This is what I tried to do throughout my career. If I'm recognized for this, good thing; if I'm not, never mind that.

And I feel comfortable, in any case, comfortable with what I have done.

No, to answer the second question about Hugo, he sent me a message and he said, Do you want to play doubles? I thought, Oh, that's probably not me receiving this message, he probably sent it to the wrong player. I said, You're not at all ambitious to play doubles with me. I thought maybe he was very ambitious for the singles, because second round in Grand Slam. I have not seen him a lot in doubles.

No, I don't know. He asked me, and I said, Yeah, of course. Certainly. You know, when I was ranked 15, that was okay, but then when my ranking went down, nobody asked me to play doubles.

No, I was very happy. I like what he does. Our styles are totally different, his and mine, but he's doing things well. He plays well here. He knows how to use the crowd. And given the way he plays and his game style, it triggers this.

He does better here than anywhere else, because if there is nobody to support him and he plays well, that's cool, but if he does here on the central court and everybody stands up, then it has more impact on the opponent, on the other player. Therefore, each time he plays in Paris, it works really well for him, and he does that really well.

So I'd like to say, Go on like this.