

# Roland Garros

Sunday, 29 May 2022

Paris, France

## Novak Djokovic

### Press Conference

N. DJOKOVIC/D. Schwartzman

6-1, 6-3, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Well done. Do you know that since 2006 you have reached the quarterfinals here every year apart from one? How do you feel about that consistency and accomplishment?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Great (smiling). Thank you. I didn't know. Thanks for reminding me of that.

Well, I mean, Grand Slams have always been a priority for the scheduling. You know, I always wanted to perform my best at these tournaments. I'm really glad that I managed to create that kind of consistency over the years and still going strong.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

**Q. The top matches at this event are either being held late afternoon or the evening session. Which is the preference for you? Do you prefer to play in the afternoon or in the evening? As a top player, do you have any say over that? Do you speak to the tournament director and express your opinion before a quarterfinal or a semifinal, for example?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, as top players, we do have requests, but those requests are not always accepted. The tournament director, along with TV, broadcasters, I think in the end of the day that that's who decides. You know, TV, whether they want your match, day or night.

You just have to adjust to that. Obviously, depending on who you play, sometimes it's favorable to play night; sometimes day. Yeah, there is no standard or no formula that works always, so to say. Even though I historically played very well and won a lot of matches under the lights on different slams, particularly in Australia.

**Q. In a similar theme, I just wondered how you felt about being scheduled on Lenglen today, obviously the second time this tournament. It can be a bit more wild over there than on Chatrier sometimes.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I mean, I was okay playing during



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the day, you know. So honestly, today I'd rather play day than playing 9:00 p.m. Conditions are different today. It's colder, slower. At night probably even slower, and even lower bounce, which would be probably favorable more to my opponent.

So I was okay.

**Q. With all due respect to both of them, Felix and Rafa, we of course, none of us knows who you will be playing, but if I could start by asking you to look ahead to a potential matchup with Felix, what that might be like, where the greatest challenges would be for you against him? And then I will have a follow-up challenge you might be able to guess.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Sure, I will talk about both. Start with Felix. You know, he's got one of the hardest-working ethics on the tour. I think he's very disciplined about his everyday chores. He's very nice guy and just hard worker and looks to improve all the time.

So it seems by results that he was doing that he's going in the right direction. Clay probably not his preferred surface, but he has improved a lot.

We played in Rome 10 days ago, few weeks ago, a very close two sets. I was actually quite surprised with his accuracy with serve. I mean, I knew he has a very good serve, but, you know, he's hitting his spots very, very well. So he uses that as a great weapon.

He's a great athlete, moves around very well. He's comfortable hitting through the ball flat and also spin. So he can play equally well behind the court and also inside. So quite a complete player.

On the other hand, you know, Nadal obviously well-anticipated match I think when the draw came out for a lot of people. I'm glad that I didn't spend too much time on the court myself up to quarterfinals, knowing that, you know, playing him in Roland Garros is always a physical battle, along with everything else. It happens. It's a huge challenge and probably the biggest one that you can have here in Roland Garros.

I'm ready for it. You know, I'm ready for both of these guys. I like the way I have been feeling, the way I have been hitting the ball. I will focus on what I need to do. I like my chances against both of them.

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**Q. You have been No. 1 for so long, but if you looked through the years of No. 1 or the weeks at No. 1, what would you say is the best thing about being No. 1? What's the toughest or worst things about being No. 1?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I think the answer is in the question, right. So being No. 1 is the best and worst thing about being No. 1, because of course that's an ultimate challenge in this sport, in any sport really, to be the best in what you do, particularly in individual sport.

I have been blessed to be No. 1 that many weeks throughout my career. That was always the highest goal beginning of every season, particularly, you know, being in the era with Federer, Nadal, you know, the guys that are greats of the game. So of course that makes the success even bigger.

On the other hand, the downside of being No. 1 is that you are always being chased by everyone else that wants to dethrone you and wants to win against you in every single match regardless of the size or category of the tournament.

But that's something I was fortunately throughout many years gotten used to that kind of feeling. So that's, you know, giving me even more motivation when I get to face guys who want to challenge me for the top spot.

You know, going for the No. 1 rankings is an ultimate challenge, because you have to play consistently well throughout the entire season, throughout the entire year, whereas, you know, other tournaments in particular -- I mean, everyone can have a great tournament or a month or three months or six months, but to be No. 1 in the end of the season, you need to play well 11 months and be consistent and defend your points and face that kind of pressures over and over again.

Yeah, I think it's really kind of a Mount Everest to climb in individual sport, particularly in this era, but where all of the top contenders for the No. 1 are playing entire season for the last 15 years, which maybe in the former generations it wasn't the case. You had top guys missing one slam, two slams maybe, and nowadays everything became so professional and everyone is so dedicated, every point counts, every match counts. So that made achievement even greater.

**Q. You have a special history with this tournament because of how many times you went to the final before finally winning it. I'm just wondering now that you have won it twice, is it blending with the other Grand Slam titles that you have or when you come back it's still a special thing for you?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: You are talking about Roland

Garros?

**Q. Yeah.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I mean, it took me years and years to win the title here. Of course I had some big heartbreaks on the court here, many finals lost and semifinals, thrilling marathon matches, mostly against Rafa prior to 2016.

Of course it was very special, very emotional to clinch that title in '16. It was a huge relief more than anything, really.

So in the years to come, I was still continuing to play consistently well here. Then luckily got another title last year.

You know, somehow winning a title here is always probably the hardest of any slam for me. Last year the second week that I had here was just probably the toughest four matches, toughest seven days I had to win any slam in my career.

So, yes, it gives it a little bit more of a significance, so to say.

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