

Roland Garros

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Rafael Nadal

Press Conference

R. NADAL/A. Zverev

7-6, 6-6 [Ret.]

THE MODERATOR: First of all, a thought for Sascha and also how you came back in both sets from a pretty big deficit.

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, yeah. Of course it's not easy and beautiful to talk after what happened. Only thing that I can say is I hope he's not too bad. Hopefully it's just the normal thing when you turn your ankle, and hopefully is nothing broken. That's what everybody hopes, and I was with Sascha, looks that they need to keep checking.

Yeah, have been a very, very tough match. I think he started the match playing amazing. I know how much means to him, fight to win his first Grand Slam.

We are colleagues, we have been practicing together a lot of times. And see a colleague on the tour like this, even if for me it's a dream be in the final of Roland Garros, of course that way is not the way that we want it to be. Feels very sorry for, if you are human, you should feel very sorry for a colleague.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. Have you spoken to Sascha since the match? What did you two say backstage when obviously he was getting medical treatment?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, if he wants to say he gonna say later, no? I was with him, yes, and he was checking there in the echography, ultrasound. He was checking the thing. I was just there to see how the things are evolving. I am not the one who says anything. If he wants to say, gonna be in, it's his decision. I can't talk for him.

Q. Obviously looked pretty slow out there. Was the court unusual in any way in terms of movement during the match? Was the court in any way unusual...

RAFAEL NADAL: The condition have been the slower conditions I played since long time ago here, because have been very humid this afternoon and if we had big



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humidity with indoor, the ball was super big and difficult to create a spin on the ball.

So I think the conditions were not the ideal for me this afternoon or the way that I like to play normally here. That's why I was not able to create the damage that I wanted over him, no?

By the way, he started the match playing amazing, honestly. Have been a miracle that first set. But I was there fighting and trying to find solutions all the time. But honestly under these conditions -- well, when Sascha is playing well in any conditions, he's an amazing player. Under these conditions, even was more difficult for me to put him away from the court, no?

Because probably with these heavy conditions, he felt that my ball is not creating the impact that normally creates against his forehand or against his backhand. For example, when I hit the forehand down the line or when I hit my forehand in and out for against his forehand, I mean, my ball was not bouncing as usual here, no?

So he was able to recover well from that position. The same thing happens when I hit my ball against his backhand, that his backhand is probably the best of the tour today.

So with that conditions, I was not able to push him back. He was able to hit a clean ball all the time, so was surviving, a lot of surviving moments during that match.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

RAFAEL NADAL: I don't think that. No, no, the problem on clay is always the same, no? When the wide thing from behind is on the floor, comes out, then is more slippery.

But, I mean, I don't think we have to create a history about that. The court is not in bad shape. It was unlucky moment. I don't think is because of the court that he turns his ankle, no? It was an accident, and I don't think the court was in bad conditions to say that is because of the court. It was very unlucky moment, and sometimes happens in every surface.

Q. I want to look one match ahead, because you might meet Casper Ruud. You have been his idol his entire career. He's been training at the Rafa



Academy. What do you think about Casper Ruud and maybe playing against him and what he's done here?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I have a huge respect for him. First of all in terms of a friend, he has a great character. He's a great guy, and he has a great family. Honestly, no? That's the main thing. As a player, of course, I respect a lot him. He did a lot of great things the last couple of years. He's the number, which number, 8? 7 in the world?

That's the ranking goes by itself. He's in the semifinals of Roland Garros fighting to be in the final, and it's not a surprise. So that's it.

Q. Happy Birthday. Congratulations on reaching the final. After all your achievements in the sport, are there still things that you want to prove to yourself, or do you feel that you have nothing left to prove?

RAFAEL NADAL: It's about every day. No, I mean, it's not about things that you need to prove. It's about how much you enjoy doing what you are doing or if you don't enjoy, then is another story, no?

But if you like what you are doing, you keep going. Because, for example, if you like to go and play golf, you keep going to play golf. If I like to play tennis and if I can and I can handle to keep playing, I keep playing because I like what I do. So that's it.

Of course I enjoy. And if I am healthy enough to play, I like the competition, honestly, no? And the competition, I like to play in the best stadiums of the world and feel myself at my age still competitive. Means a lot to me, no? That makes me feel in some way proud and happy about all the work that we did.

I don't know. That's it.

Q. This was the third tough match you had in a row. How do you feel physically with the legs, with the foot, and everything?

RAFAEL NADAL: No, physically I'm okay. Normally my problem is not the physical performance, no.

Of course today the conditions have been very hot, super humid. You know, I know from experience that when these conditions happens, I suffer a little bit more in terms of physical. Happen to me in Australia against Shapo. Today was different. Not that crazy but even like this I was suffering. But I think both are fast, no.

Have been a lot of up-and-downs during the match, but a good level of tennis with great points. But of course when the ball is slow, conditions are very heavy with big humidity, then physically you suffer more than with dry

conditions.

Q. Besides the physical challenges, can you talk a little bit about the emotional, psychological challenges you faced since Rome until now to be able to make it to the final? Everything that you have been through in the ups and downs, how challenging has it been on the psychological side?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I talk enough about that after Rome. My mind didn't change, no?

As I said, I explained everything going through my mind after Rome, and nothing change. At the same time, I was not very positive after that about my foot, but I was positive that I will be able to play here.

And here I am. I played, I fought, I did all the things possible to give myself at least a chance to be where I am and happy of course to be able to give myself another chance to play on second Sunday here in the final of Roland Garros, no?

So that means a lot to me. And even if all the sacrifices and all the things that I need to go through to try to keep playing, really makes sense when you enjoy moments like I'm enjoying in this tournament.

Q. I was just wondering about Casper, because he came to your academy I think it was four years ago, what you saw in him then, and did you ever imagine the potential of you playing a final against him here? Are you able to enjoy the fact that your academy is bringing up this kind of talent?

RAFAEL NADAL: I mean, Casper is a professional. He has I think a very good character to play tennis. He's very relaxed, humble. He's always in a positive mood about learning.

I think in the academy we were able to help him a little bit during this period of time, but more than another thing is about, as I always say, I like to see the good persons achieving his dreams.

I think Casper, I'm happy for him, as I said before, I'm happy for his mom, dad. I know them very well. They are a super-healthy family and great people. As always, I am super happy when I see these great people having success.

So for me, is not a big surprise. I mean, Casper is one of the candidates about winning in every clay court event that he's playing. He's one of the clear favorites, no? Yeah, I mean, he's not a big surprise at all.

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