

Roland Garros

Friday, 26 May 2023

Paris, France

Ugo Humbert

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

Q. We left you in Monte-Carlo with some doubts about clay. Is that a joke between you and clay? What happened in Monte-Carlo, and what is happening in the beginning of Roland Garros, with challengers? What's happening?

UGO HUMBERT: Well, lots of good things happened in Monte-Carlo. Lots of good matches, even though I didn't win. I felt that against Sonogo I even played my best match on clay.

Q. How did you make so much progress in one goal? What was the trigger?

UGO HUMBERT: Well, after Madrid we talked a little bit with Jeremy about playing on clay, and I tried to apply what he was saying. It was a bit difficult for the first two matches, but I tried to continue, became more and more natural.

The fact that I won the match against Taro, a four-hours-and-a-quarter match, the fight that I wanted gave me more confidence. I took more and more confidence with each match, and I played well.

You look surprised (smiling).

Q. In Monte-Carlo, you also said that you never expected anything from clay. Are you going to expect something from clay this time?

UGO HUMBERT: No, honestly I don't expect much. If I win 150 points on clay, well, it's all very well. Roland Garros is just pleasure. I want to enjoy each match. I'm already going to try and enjoy the first. But I have no special objective. I'm just happy about what's happening to me. Nothing special.

Q. Do you realize you lacked 15 or 20 points to be seeded? Does it upset you?

UGO HUMBERT: No. I was 80, I think, when I started playing on clay. Then I was 38. I don't know. I'm not seeded. That's it.

Q. You progressed physically with Lapo Becherini,



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who is your new physical coach. Can you tell us about how you work with him.

UGO HUMBERT: We work hard, very hard. Jeremy introduced him to me. We started working together last July, and he said he thought he was a really good physical coach.

I was looking for someone who could train me that way. I felt it went well with my body. But this winter we were playing four hours of tennis a day and four hours of preparation.

So last year I wasn't really up to it. Now I'm really well-prepared. I can play a four-hour match. In the past I couldn't have. So the fact that I was able to get back to the court and I was able to play is great. Great preparation with Lapo.

Q. You're now French No. 1. It's new. How do you approach this new status? People might be discovering you, French No. 1. How do you approach this new position? Is it additional pressure?

UGO HUMBERT: No, thank you. It was an objective for me when I was -- I had my best position, my best ranking two years ago, I wanted to be No. 1. And I put myself a lot of pressure on that. I didn't feel ready for that position at the time, then I thought a lot about it with Jeremy. We felt it was an interesting objective, and I'm now very happy, I'm super happy. It's not an additional pressure. I'm just happy.

Q. Coming back to clay and this specific relationship you have with clay, with the victories do you think that now you feel pleasure when you're playing on clay? Do you have a different and additional pleasure?

UGO HUMBERT: Yes. I've already booked my flights for February. I'm going to take the South American tour. I really enjoy it much more. It's much more technical for lots of matches. I used to stop wrong, and I tried to identify the solution, and now I realize that for clay you really have to play tactically, you have to find the right solution, in line with your opponent.

I'm much better prepared now, and I love it (smiling).

Q. Mannarino is answering an interview next door.

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He'll be your first opponent. I hope you have more. It's a dual between two Frenchmen. I didn't know you well, but I can hear you laughing and smiling. Are you always like that, or is it just Roland Garros?

UGO HUMBERT: No, I'm always like that. With my team, we laugh all the time. Even though we play seriously.

Talking about Adrian Mannarino, it will never be an easy match. I'm concerned. I have to prepare well by Sunday.

I practiced with him in Bordeaux. He's left-handed. I have never played a left hand on clay. So it won't be easy.

Q. A somber note. Jeremy was still registered, and he pulled out yesterday. Is that hard for the team?

UGO HUMBERT: I don't think it's easy. I think he would have loved to play the tournament. His whole family is coming. But he wants to take care of his knee, because the doctor told him that he was on the right track, so he didn't want to take any risk. He'll play doubles with Fabrice, so he's very happy.

So he said I'll have enough emotions with you, so I'll try to give him the best emotions possible.

Q. Now that you love it and you have become an expert on clay, did you change anything in your game technically or are you still faithful to your principles?

UGO HUMBERT: Well, I understand better how I must play. I used to be extremely tense when I was playing. I never had time to come back on the ball. I got the impression that they were all playing well.

The thing is now I respect the game better. When I'm far, I try to play higher. When I'm closer to the net, I try to be more aggressive because I'm an attacker. And the mix of both means I can play well. I think I move well, as well.

So there is lots of good things.

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