

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Casper Ruud

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Casper, welcome back to Roland Garros. Talk about your first-round opponent, Elias, in this all-Scandinavian battle. How much do you know about him and what do you expect?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, it's gonna be fun. I don't think we ever played an official match. We practiced with each other here and there throughout the years, and we know each other quite well personally.

He's one of the few guys that I sometimes go out to dinner with, him and his brother. A few guys on tour, I mean, that I actually feel like a good friend off court. So it's going to be fun.

I think he's a player that he's a couple years older than me, so I really looked up to him when I was younger, and he was sort of beginning his sort of international success on the ITF, junior tour, and then coming onto the ATP Tour. So we know each other well, so it's going to be fun.

He's passed through the quallies. Yeah, he deserve to be here in the main draw, and I'm going to treat him like any other opponent, a tough one. He's been showing that he's been playing really good through the quallies, he didn't lose a set, so I think he's in good shape.

THE MODERATOR: English questions.

Q. You have had an up-and-down clay court swing, you had the title in Estoril, a few early losses. What were you searching for going into Rome, and did you find it with the great deep run there?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I think I said it before Madrid that I needed to be a little bit more aggressive somehow, and my returns were a little too short in Barcelona, in Monte-Carlo. In Monte-Carlo, I lost to Struff, he was just ripping me off the court.

In Barcelona, I played a pretty good match against Cerundolo, I remember, but I was just a little too short all the time. I said to myself, I'm going to try to play a little bit deeper, take a little bit more risk.

But in Madrid it was tough because it's so fast there, so you sort of feel like you come almost late to every ball



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because the ball flies through the air much faster than any other clay. So I didn't really get to feel it too well there, and I lost early.

From there on I had two weeks to work on specific things, you know, and returning was one of them, which I think worked pretty well in Rome. I was able to break my opponents many times in my matches, and playing, you know, a little bit better with more confidence as every match went on from the baseline as well.

So, yeah, it's been going up and down. A little bit similar to what happened last year. Obviously last year I was able to win Geneva that I didn't do this year. But I'm coming here with good confidence, you know, it's best-of-five sets on clay. I have proven to myself and others from last year that I can do well and win many matches.

It's nice, you know, being back here, you know, live through the memories that I have from last year and, you know, the belief that I can do well here obviously grows when you have done it at least once before. I'm hoping for a good run now in these two weeks.

Q. Some people have said you look like Niall Horan, who is the singer with the boy band One Direction. What do you think of that comparison? And also, do you feel like you're heading in one direction with a clear game plan of how you are going to play well here at Roland Garros? Or do you think there could be a few twists and turns and surprises along the way?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I think I have seen some pictures where we resemble a little bit more than others. Sometimes yes; sometimes not so much. That's fun. I think there are a couple other players I have also seen look like other famous people. And I think the most one that I find personally, like, so similar is Khachanov and Hemsworth, one of the Hemsworth brothers. It's a joke how much they look the same.

I don't think, you know, me and Niall Horan is the same level of resemblance.

Yeah, it's fun. It's funny how fans and people sort of get this and make all these pictures online. It's a little fun for us to think of ourselves. I haven't really thought too much about it.



In terms of my play I think I have a clear visual plan of what I need to do in order to try to win matches here. Every match that you play is going to be tough one, no matter if I play Elias Ymer who I'm gonna play on Tuesday or if I play a big server like Isner or if I'm playing, you know, a fast player like Schwartzman. They are all different play styles. I just need to focus on my own stuff. Hopefully that will give me chances to win matches here.

Obviously last year gave me sort of belief that and sort of knowledge that it's possible to go deeper for me. I'm sitting here this year in a different position than I was last year heading into the tournament. So I think, you know, that's something that is going to boost my confidence.

And when we start on Tuesday, I'm gonna try to know and remember that also last year was first round was really tough. I played against Tsonga on Chatrier, it was four very close sets. Also tough match emotionally because it was his last match, so it was a tough challenge.

I'm prepared for another tough challenge on Tuesday.

Q. Curious how you're feeling physically. Did you have to end practice early, maybe have some issue with the neck? Can you describe that?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, it was just something that happened during practice, like a small, I don't know what you call in English, maybe a kink, something that I just needed to get some manipulation and feel looser.

It's not a big issue. I have still to feel better and already now sitting here I can move it more freely. I don't know what happened during practice, but it's no big concern luckily.

It was just a little painful with the neck. Whenever you have pain in the neck, it's a little, you feel very limited in your movement, so I didn't want to force anything.

I have a tough practice session tomorrow with Novak, and I'm gonna get some really good intensity and so on there, so, you know, the goal is obviously to be physically ready for these longer matches, best-of-five on clay. Wasn't the biggest of concerns.

Q. Who do you see as the favorite and the outsiders in this tournament?

CASPER RUUD: Oh, it's open. I think obviously you have Novak and Alcaraz on the top side of the draw who are biggest names and maybe the biggest favorites to reach the semis. But I think also Tsitsipas is there. Let's not forget about him. He's been in the final here before.

There are many I feel like every week or every

tournament these days, especially on ATP Tour, it's always like some guy who comes a little bit out of nowhere makes quarters and semis, and that's very tough to say who it is.

On the bottom side of the draw, obviously Daniil is second seeded. He's been playing great this year, honestly, showing he can play well on both hard court and clay. He won Rome.

Obviously Holger is a big threat. He plays very fearless. Seems like he's in a good mode and playing good lately. He's one to look out for.

But obviously like to think that myself, if I play well, can have a chance to go far in the tournament. And obviously also Jannik is on the bottom side also. Every time I see Jannik play it's beautiful tennis, beautiful winners, and he's dangerous on all surfaces as well. He's been in the quarters here as well and pushed Rafa quite hard I remember one year.

It's open. But I think, you know, what I did now is just go through the top eight seeds so that was maybe not the most-fun answer. I would say Alcaraz is, to me, the biggest favorite because he has won a slam before last year. Then him or Novak has to be sort of the ultimate favorite because Novak has won so many times. This year's clay season has been maybe not what he expected, but I'm sure he has good confidence in myself knowing that he's won 22 slams already, and all the other players in the tournament have maybe only won one or not one, and obviously Wawrinka has won three.

It's a tough question to give one clear answer, but those two to me are maybe the biggest ones.

Q. This year first time in many, many years there is no Rafa, your last year's final opponent. Does it feel different because of that? Do you feel also that you have more chances because of that?

CASPER RUUD: Well, you know, last year I obviously lost to him, but if it wasn't him in the final, I could have lost to anyone else. I mean, it's not like just because Rafa is not here I think everyone feels like now is my chance to win, you know. It's so many good players these days.

It's a little sad, honestly. I mean, to me, my earliest memory watching tennis is him winning his first Roland Garros. From there on, I was like six years old and I said to myself, you know, I always want to play tennis on TV one day. That's sort of where my dream to become a professional player started.

So I guess it's like 18 years later, it's the first time he's not here again. It's a little strange, but, you know, the tournament still goes on. No one is sort of bigger than

the sport. It's gonna be exciting. I think obviously we know that there won't be a Rafa in the final this year, and I think those two spots are up for grabs for anyone. It's anyone's game.

I think we are all kind of motivated, especially the young guys. I think we have all shown that anyone has the potential to go far these days, and we're just hoping that these two weeks will be ours in a way. I think everyone thinks that way.

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