

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

N. DJOKOVIC/A. Kovacevic

6-3, 6-2, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. I'm going to ask you to reflect upon your memory a bit. This one goes way back to 2003, more than half your life ago, but it was here at the juniors where you made your Grand Slam debut, I believe. I'm doing a piece on the juniors. Do you have any reflections on that year? It was a pretty crazy draw with two other Grand Slam champions in the future, Stan and Andy, also Gael Monfils, Jo Tsonga. Any thoughts and remembrances of that specific event?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes, I do. Thank you for shining the light on juniors. It's important to write about them as well and to give them even more I guess attention and incentive to keep pushing and working their way to professional tennis.

We all have played junior circuits, you know, to some extent. Some more; some less.

I qualified for Roland Garros junior event in 2003, and I think I lost in third round to Gimeno Traver, if I'm not mistaken, who is coach of Bautista Agut right now (smiling). It's kind of an interesting cycle of life, in a way, seeing some familiar faces.

As you mentioned, some great names in the draw at that point. I don't know who won it in the end. Was it Almagro or Wawrinka won it? Stan won it? He won senior Roland Garros as well.

Yeah, for juniors, Grand Slams, as well as for seniors, are equally important, you know, the most important tournaments that you are aiming for basically as a junior, because that's where you have an opportunity to present yourself to eventually someone that can sponsor you or can manage you.

And, you know, they are very important events not just for results but recognition and getting your name out there on the stage, that's where the biggest amount of managers and sports come together, and agencies, and you're hoping that someone can approach you and offer



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something to you and all the help that is so needed for a lot of the junior guys to make their life a bit easier towards professional tennis.

Q. I want to ask you about what your approach is like going into a match like today against someone like Aleksandar, who you know is a young guy, might be in a little of awe of the stage, in awe of you, someone who looked up to you as a kid, making his Grand Slam debut. How do you go into a match like that? Is there a part of you that thinks, All right, let me get on him early and sort of show him who I am and what this really is all about?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, you know, credit to have Aleks, he played very well, especially in the third set, you know, in the second part of the third set, and made me work for my victory in the third set.

He's a very nice, very nice guy. We practiced with each other a few times actually during the US Open some years ago. And obviously we speak the same language, he has a Serbian background. We get along really well. I met his family, very nice people.

He's trying his best, and I think he's got the game. He's got the game, no doubt, to go far. How far, you know, it depends on various things. But, you know, I was pleasantly surprised with his level, considering he hasn't played maybe that much on clay.

I think I saw somewhere that he said he was training in Serbia until he was around 10 years old, 11 years old on clay, because most of our courts are on clay in Serbia. Later on he went to the States and spent most of his time on hard courts.

He played really well, and he was handling himself very good there mentally, hanging in there. I served for the match, he broke me. I mean, credit to him for fighting spirit.

You know, of course I want to dominate whoever I play against regardless of the circumstances and who is across the net, but, you know, sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. I think I played really well and held things under control for two-and-a-half sets and then lost my serve and things got a little bit on a wrong side for me. But, you know, I managed to hold my nerves and played pretty much a perfect tiebreak.



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So overall pleased, pleased and content with my level, you know. I can always play better, I know I can do it, but considering also the conditions, they were quite tricky today with a lot of wind. It was a good match.

Q. I want to take you back as well. It's 10 years this year since you played Andy in the Wimbledon final, and I just wanted to get your recollections of that day and what it was like playing him on Centre Court.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Can I answer that during Wimbledon? No, I'm kidding (smiling).

It was not a great result for me obviously in the end, painful to lose a Grand Slam final, especially Wimbledon final. But, you know, in the end of the day I was happy for Andy because he deserved it. He was working so hard to get his hands on the Wimbledon title, and he has two, and the first one against me in 2012, as you mentioned, sorry, 2013.

It was a straight-set win, I remember. I didn't play at my best, but, you know, also was due to his level of tennis that was very, very solid. He just outplayed me on the day. Of course he had the entire nation behind his back. Great Britain got the winner of Wimbledon after, what was it, 77 years.

Yeah, I was happy for him, because we got along very well throughout the entire careers, and we know each other for so long. But for me, of course, losing a match wasn't a perfect sensation, so to say, afterwards, but again, I had to congratulate him because he was a better player that day, and it was kind of a perfect scenario for Great Britain and for him as a British player to win in Wimbledon on Centre Court.

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