

Roland Garros

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Ons Jabeur

Press Conference

O. JABEUR/L. Bronzetti

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THE MODERATOR: Ons, it's never easy to get the first win at a slam, but you did so today in convincing fashion. Can you just talk about the keys to your performance today.

ONS JABEUR: Yeah, it wasn't an easy round, for sure, but I tried my best to win in two sets. Obviously I'm trying to get back to my level 100%, and I think that will come match by match and by playing more matches.

But I'm happy that I'm healthy and I'm moving well on the court.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. How were the nerves today? Because obviously after what happened last year when you came in with a lot of confidence and then it didn't go your way, how was it out on the court today?

ONS JABEUR: Yeah, I mean, playing on Philippe Chatrier is such a beautiful court, but I don't have a good history with it.

You know, like every first round is very difficult in a Grand Slam. I was pretty stressed, I've got to say, but I was just trying to play my game. The most important thing for me was to feel healthy and to move well on the court.

But yeah, it was a good game. I will definitely learn from it and prepare for the next games. You know, let's see, I need few matches in, and hopefully I can get that here.

Q. Well played today. I remember at the start of the year you said that you and your husband had two different Grand Slam trophies as your lock screens on your phone. Just wondered if you still both have those.

ONS JABEUR: I didn't say Grand Slam. It was two different trophies. It can be a Grand Slam, it can be a non-Grand Slam. I just want to leave it that way (laughter).



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He has a Grand Slam one. I have not a Grand Slam one. He has this one, actually, so...

Q. Is that motivating?

ONS JABEUR: Yes. I mean, we both love French Open. He loves Roland Garros a lot, because he grew up watching it more than me, I've got to say. It's a Tunisian thing, apparently. Everybody really loves Roland Garros and watch it.

So let's see. I may be able to get to the second week, and from there we can discuss more the pictures and maybe add more and more pictures in the phone (smiling).

Q. Nice win today. Mirra Andreeva, I think you've met her before, but she says that you're one of her idols.

ONS JABEUR: I saw that somewhere. It's really nice.

Q. Curious what that's like. Because even from our perspective as journalists, in the past when we ask young players who they idolize, they said Serena, Maria, Venus...

ONS JABEUR: Sharapova.

Q. Of course. That's starting to change. What is that like for you to hear that there is a 16-year-old player on the WTA Tour that really looks up to you?

ONS JABEUR: Well, makes me feel old, for one. (Smiling.)

Honestly, that was amazing, seeing that she talked about me, and she was doing well. I was really happy for her.

You know, hopefully we can play each other. I can give her a signed picture. She can put it in her bedroom. I don't know. This is the first time that somebody says that. But it's special.

Honestly, I always try to inspire the new generation, and definitely proud of it. That will motivate me, for sure, to do better and be a better player on and off the court.

Q. You were good very young. A lot of players when you're growing up there would have been a lot of players on your level or around your level, but I



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wondered if there was anyone when you were growing up, Tunisian players in particular, who you thought were going to make it but didn't make it?

ONS JABEUR: From Tunisia?

Q. Yeah, or outside.

ONS JABEUR: I mean, I grew up playing a lot of Arabic and African Championship, and definitely, I cannot remember names, but I know there were a lot of talented people there. So many that they could not make it, but it's -- I don't know.

But for me, to look back at the African Championships that I played, it's one of the best periods for me, because it's like so innocent playing tennis. All you want is win. You don't care how many matches you play per day. We played like three matches a day. Nobody cares.

I think we had really amazing, talented people from South Africa, from Zimbabwe, from Morocco, Egypt, different other countries, Algeria. Unfortunately we did not see all of them here, but hopefully that will change one day.

Q. It's funny, you play against them, you're rivals, and then you expect them to be with you all the way through but they're not there.

ONS JABEUR: Yeah, I mean, it is very tough. You know, playing African Championship is not the same as playing in the juniors. But especially, you know, in the juniors, because I have seen a lot -- we had like the African continent group that they travel together and do like three months' tournaments. The ITF honestly had a really good program for all of us. I did benefit from that.

I don't know. Hopefully in the future we can do better and, you know, with maybe me and Mayar now, represent the African region, we can inspire more and more players.

Q. There has been much celebration of Yannick Noah's character, his impact, his presence in tennis. What has his role been in African tennis? Was he any kind of an inspiration for you and do you know him?

ONS JABEUR: Yannick Noah is somebody very funny. I had the pleasure to play mixed doubles with him in Tunisia. We had an exhibition.

Honestly, yeah, he's an inspiration for so many. Honestly, I enjoyed playing a lot with him. I discovered his character really that day.

But yeah, overall, I enjoy seeing his videos and when he was with the Fed Cup team, his speeches, it's very

inspiring. Yeah, hopefully we can meet each other again here (smiling).

Q. If you could, I don't know whether you can, but if you had to capture Yannick in a word or a phrase, what would that be?

ONS JABEUR: Inspiration, motivation, and funny. Because he's funny, really.

Q. A quick question about Justine Henin. I know that you kind of watched her a little bit growing up and stuff. What did she mean to you as a player? What did you glean from watching her as maybe a role model, the way that she played her tennis that you think might have fingerprints on your game today?

ONS JABEUR: Honestly, I'm terrible with this. Everybody asked me that I watched a lot of players, but...

Q. If you didn't, that's okay, too. I'm not putting you on the spot.

ONS JABEUR: No, honestly I didn't grow up watching a lot of tennis, unfortunately. Maybe I didn't have the opportunity to.

But yeah, Justine, everybody knows her and she's an amazing player. She really inspired a lot of generations. You know, that determination in her game and the fact that she's fighting all the time to be, you know, a champion, that's really inspiring.

For me, I love Kim Clijsters. I heard like when she doesn't play for like two years, when she pick up the racquet it was like she was training every day. That's a quality I don't think a lot of tennis players or any tennis player has that.

I had the opportunity and the chance to meet her, so that's even more special for me. So yeah, I really love Kim (smiling).

Q. First game is always tricky. How do you feel after winning your first game here in Roland Garros? And your reaction when you see Tunisian people watching you in coffee shops following your games, does that put a lot of pressure on your shoulders?

ONS JABEUR: Yeah, I mean, capturing the first round here is always amazing, and hopefully my game will improve and I can, you know, play better and more maybe relaxed in the next games.

For sure I know every Tunisian is watching Roland Garros and wishing me the best. So let's see. I like to use that pressure as a great thing for the future.

Q. Following up on what you said about African players, what do you think are keys to getting more players from the continent in professional tennis, more Ons Jabeurs?

ONS JABEUR: Hopefully better than Ons Jabeur. You know, I believe that the work already started by having more and more African players here and playing and, you know, showing that it's not impossible.

Hopefully players will believe more and see that it is possible to win Grand Slams. Hopefully have more academies, more facilities for, you know, Africa to be able to practice anywhere, any country.

Second, you know, give the opportunity to players to travel and pay for coaches and have all of that.

I don't believe in having all of that, like, handed away to players, because I believe that players should work hard enough to have these facilities, but most of the players they grew up not having enough money to pay for the coach or have enough facilities, and they grew up and they become stronger and become an amazing player.

So I believe if they believe enough in themselves, they can make it here. That's the most important thing for me.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

Q. Just before I was speaking with Fouzia, who is 77 years old, who is a fan and who came from Tunis to see you. Can you talk about the impact you can have on this Tunisian public, this role as an ambassador you might have. There's a lot of Tunisians in France but there's a lot of Tunisians coming from Tunisia.

ONS JABEUR: I would like to thank this fan for traveling all the way to here. Next time I will definitely try to speak with her. I'm delighted that Tunisians and the African world watch tennis more and more. I hope to keep up with the good work, to have a deep run in this draw.

I know that a lot of people wake up very early and watch my matches on TV, in cafes very early, and this is what motivates me to have a deep run.

Q. A year ago it didn't go well on this central court on Sunday for your first match, so was it important for you to erase these bad memories and to go back on a good start again?

ONS JABEUR: Yes, indeed. I have played quite a few times on the Philippe Chatrier court. It's the first time that I had a win. I feel that I actually played Philippe Chatrier himself today and I won.

The fact that I started on a Tuesday, it's a good thing, because it's hard to start on a Sunday in a Grand Slam or

in a tournament in general.

A first match is always hard. I want to go far, and hopefully I'll be here during the second week.

Q. What are your feelings? The beginning of the season was hard. You had a lot of physical problems. How do you feel now?

ONS JABEUR: I feel 100% fit. I need to have more matches under my belt to gain confidence, to up my game on the court.

This match will help me gain confidence and help me go further undoubtedly.

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