

Roland Garros

Wednesday, 31 May 2023

Paris, France

Gael Monfils

Press Conference

G. MONFILS/S. Baez

3-6, 6-3, 7-5, 1-6, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. Where would you rank this match in your career emotionally and from playing-wise and from everything?

GAEL MONFILS: Yeah, it's definitely in like top two. I had the same one almost kind of some years ago against Cuevas on the Lenglen. It was unbelievable atmosphere as well. Of course this one is another flavor. I'm older, and even less chances, let's say, to win this match today.

Yeah, top two, top one. It was great atmosphere tonight, like I guess for some spectator as well. I know I have some friends for the first time they came to Roland Garros, so I think it was a good experience for them.

Q. On your physical condition, obviously very tough, tough match. When you look ahead two days what can you probably recover and give for the tournament and for yourself?

GAEL MONFILS: Yeah, I hope to recover as good. I'm tired, but as we are with a tough practice. It's been long time. I haven't play with that atmosphere.

You know, I was cramping at the end, a lot of with the nerves, and of course I'm tired, but it's a big part of the nerves. I'm playing full adrenaline, like honestly I asked the crowd to scream, and somehow I juice up. I know at one hand I will pay, I will pay, and I had to hold it at the end.

But I hope to have a good night today and tomorrow and heavy recover, and no matter what, I will be ready for him Thursday (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

Q. We've seen special moments with you since you started your career, but this moment will be remembered for a long period of time, as you said in English, because you're older, but also because you've been going through a long tunnel with



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questions and doubts about your physical condition. Now that you've won this first round, this match, this crazy scenario at Roland Garros, what's your first feeling to experience this this evening?

GAEL MONFILS: Well, you forget it's the first round, you'll say, Oh, wow, that was amazing crazy this evening, and then I didn't even know where I was.

And I thought, I succeeded, I won this match. Even though I knew deep within it would be really tough, I practiced against him last week, I thought he was such a player. When I saw the draw, I was not very happy. I thought, no, this is not the game play I want. Not for the first round.

And then once the match started, well, you have to accept, you accept, and then I found solutions, unexpected solutions. I'm very, very happy, you see.

As I said, it's one of my best matches, the best sports moment I could experience.

Q. Congrats.

GAEL MONFILS: Thank you.

Q. You were saying before the tournament that you wanted to enjoy, and I suppose you have really enjoyed. Did you think you would enjoy that much?

GAEL MONFILS: No, no, no, frankly. As you said, I loved it. I didn't expect this at all, at all. Didn't even expect I could come back, make the right tactical choices.

Here again, what I did was very gutsy, from my guts. That's why I dropped the fourth set. I was dead. Lots of people would say, Why didn't you do something?

I couldn't do anything. I told Mikael, I said, No, I need 10 minutes. Well, 25 minutes I needed. Okay.

But you see, it's crazy. Because that's something you do but not consciously. You might say it was silly, but you do it consciously, because you're quite calm and serene, which is not my case at all, but I managed to do it. And that's crazy at Roland Garros, mentally.

I talked to myself, and I said, Don't you worry, I'll recover, and I'll beat him and kill him during the fifth one. Think



about this, I'm totally crazy. Yeah, I'm telling you the truth, that's what I was saying to myself.

And you know, because if I do the contrary, that's weird. But I'm quite open with myself. If I lose 6-4 on the fourth one, I'll be beaten 6-1 in the fifth set. If it doesn't work for any reasons, I'm dead.

Oh, well, you know, openly, I would have started the fifth set at 5-0, I would have been happy, but this is a choice I made, which paid off.

Q. A follow-up question. Okay, you dropped the fourth set, but then Love-4 during the fifth set, almost Love-5. Could you describe what you felt physically, mentally?

GAEL MONFILS: Well, three things. I thought, oh, no, I don't want to have Love-6. Only Murray did this to me. I thought, oh, hell, no. And Robredo as well I think. I thought, no, no, I want to at least win a game. And then unconsciously, I thought, if I manage to push things, there's a world with the wind with me, on the other side, that is, of the court. And who knows? Who knows?

Then with mixed feeling, I was very happy to have won a game. I thought, oh, good, it's not going to be Love-6, and two very good forehand shots. I thought there's a world there, we're going to do something.

Q. Before the match point, you were limping on the court, and you turned around, you were quite dancing. You put a grin to the crowd. Did that mean that, okay, you were knackered, but you would still use some of your fuel to beat him?

GAEL MONFILS: Frankly, you might say sometimes it was a cinema. No, I was really hurt. It was hurting, really. That's when we're called high-level sportsmen, because from time to time, during practice, you manage to overcome the pain. I had cramps, but quite high in the thigh.

So I could do this. Right, left, right, left. I could do this. My strokes were bigger. But then the dropshot, that really hurt.

When he did the dropshot, I was looking at Mickey, I was laughing, I thought, oh, no, now two legs, it's going to be complicated. It was hurting.

Q. I have a technical question on your serve. We saw that between the first serve and second serve you don't do things mechanically in the same way. Is it a change, a novelty?

GAEL MONFILS: Well, I was going through several steps with my serve. You know, the foot together and then the drive, and then feet apart.

Q. (Off mic.)

GAEL MONFILS: Yes. With Gunter I was serving in a certain way. I wanted to change this a little with Mikael, and with Mikael he made me serve in a different way. I felt it's better for my second serve. For the first serve it's better with the drive.

So I have it. I don't think about it. It's instinctive.

The only thing that bothers me is that from time to time if I want to have a kick shot, you can see it, you can read my game, because my feet are not apart but together.

But, okay, either I will overcome this or continue like this.

Q. Your first win since you're back on this court. You couldn't dream better.

GAEL MONFILS: Yeah, that's true. When I was back on the tour, I thought, okay, I'll wait for Roland Garros, and then the first match and -- no, no, frankly, I didn't even expect to win the match. It's only something positive for me.

My objective is to be fit so that I can have long matches. I don't want to have a big drop, but I want to be able to hold on for these long matches where you have to be careful.

And I worked and practiced well before, and I thought even though recently I lost many matches, I was playing tournaments, practice, practice, tournament, practice, tournament, practice, it was good. It did me good. And I gained confidence in my body, I mean.

Generally, well, you know, if you get injured, people tend to forget that an injury is easier. With my foot it was easier to overcome that, because you work on this.

But then there is a fear. You're afraid of what you might do. Then you have to strengthen your knees, your shoulders, your arms, and all that. And you lose a lot. Then it's the eye. It's the right choice at the right moment to feel you're powerful again.

Yeah, this injury was hurting more than usual, because there were two things I couldn't do. I couldn't run. Usually I have this physical condition, and I can do lots of activities off the courts, basketball, padel, but this time nothing, nothing at all, nothing of that at all.

At a certain age, yeah, it's a bit tough when you start again, when you're back on the courts. It was the first time.

And there's something else. It's the first time it's apprehension. It really hurt at Montreal, and frankly, the

first match, the real first match, unfortunately, when it was tough was against Ugo. Then the first match when I thought, yes, I can run, I can run, come on, run, come on.

Then, okay, you might be hurt but you're still there, and there were so many things that I had to adjust.

This match last week in Lyon was really good for me, even though I was defeated, but I could run. I could run without this apprehension. That is, if I move on the right side, it's going to be another injury. That's what you always think about. When your injury is more severe, you have this apprehension, this fear.

But I feel a lot better, so I'm very happy about this.

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