

Roland Garros

Wednesday, 31 May 2023

Paris, France

Denis Shapovalov

Press Conference

D. SHAPOVALOV/M. Arnaldi

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THE MODERATOR: Questions for Denis. Please use the microphone.

Q. Not to start with an injury question, but the knee held up fine and you were great?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, obviously. Yeah, no, it felt good actually yesterday and today. Zero pain, so that was very good. So hopefully that continues, but, you know, knock on wood.

Yeah, it was definitely pretty surprising waking up yesterday with no pain in the knee after such a long match. Yeah, it was a good feeling for sure.

Q. I didn't get a chance to ask you this the other day. Which knee, just to make sure? Because you can't tell.

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: No, it's the left knee. Yeah.

Q. What is the problem with it exactly diagnosis-wise?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: I don't really want to share too much about it. Yeah, tennis players don't really share too much about their bodies, and I try to do the same. I would rather not. Just my preference.

Q. But it's not an, oh, my God, maybe surgery type thing? It's just something you have to deal with? That's the question.

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Luckily, they said for now surgery is pretty rare. That would be the last case resort. So, luckily, it's not that.

But, yeah, it's a lot of rehab and a lot of strengthening and just getting the body stronger and stronger in all the areas around my leg.

Q. I don't know how true this is, but I've heard that when you're in Paris, you like croissants, but rather controversially, with Nutella as well. Now, this is



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quite important because you might not know this, but there's been some serious journalism around the Nutella curse. It's actually affected sport stars in the past. I know that the sport is just recovering from the Netflix curse. So just tell us about your love of Nutella, and how confident you are of rewriting history and breaking the Nutella curse here at Roland Garros by playing some great tennis?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, it's interesting. It's the first time I've heard about that, but I'll try to do my research. You know, I'm a little superstitious, but I don't think I'll go that far (laughing). I think I like my Nutella too much to give it up. Yeah, if I do go deep, maybe I'll think a little bit more about it.

I think I've had some good wins as well with some Nutella and some bad food before, the day before. So yeah, I don't think it affects too much.

Q. So the perfect meal and the perfect preparation for Roland Garros, what will you give us for that?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: I mean, I'm definitely trying to eat healthy. I'm not saying that. You know, once in a while if I'm just walking on the street with my girlfriend and we pass by an ice cream place, you know, I might stop by. Who knows? Chocolate croissant, I might go in for one.

But I try to stay healthy for the most part and, yeah, eat well, but also just kind of listen to my body, whatever I'm craving and what I feel that I need.

Q. We're about three months removed from your "Players' Tribune" article. I'm curious in the last couple of weeks, have you gotten more responses from it and what you hope the long-lasting impact of that will be?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, r sure. It's definitely still a long way to go with everything, but I think it had a good reflection from the article. For me it's more about getting awareness out and getting people talking. I think it's happening more and more. Players are stepping up.

You see the NCAA, the girls standing up and speaking more about it. Obviously the Canadian soccer team was speaking a lot about it and the unfairness of the situation. So it's good that the female athletes are feeling more able to talk freely about it. I still think it's a long way to

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go, but definitely there's been some progress for sure.

Q. There's two really powerful portrayals of both your mother and girlfriend. I'm wondering if they got a chance to read it before it came out and if they did, what they thought of it?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: I think they're both really happy with it. I spoke to my girlfriend quite a lot about it during, and after obviously, because I was actually in Stockholm when I did the interview. Yeah, we talked a lot.

And we just talk generally a lot about that issue. There's a lot of things, like, she's educated me on that I had no idea. I just assumed things were the same way, but they're not.

With my mother, I mean, she didn't really know about the article until it came out. Obviously she was very flattered. She appreciated the fact that I noticed and looking back at things I noticed or understood why things were the way they were and that she wasn't taken seriously. It was difficult for her as a female.

Yeah, I mean, it sucks. Hopefully my article and everyone stepping forward can make a change, and hopefully we can impact the world in some way.

Q. I guess you've played other big name players, No. 1 and 2 players before, and before the match you sort of knew what they were like and then you found out what they're really like. What do you think about Alcaraz going into that match and what you know beforehand?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: I mean, first of all, I'm a huge, huge fan of his. I think he wears the shirt on his sleeve really well. I think he's a great guy. He's super humble for achieving what he has at such a young age.

You can see how much he enjoys being on the court and the situations that are coming forward to him. You know, he's not in an easy spot being No. 1 and so young and so much noise around him.

I really look up to him. I think he is also just a nice guy. I mean, in the locker rooms he's always saying hi. He's always been polite since he came onto the scene. I think he has a great team around him. Everyone around him knows the tour really well.

It's going to be a challenge. It's going to be a tough battle. Obviously he's a great player, especially on clay courts, obviously everywhere, but especially on clay courts. Three out of five is not going to be easy against him, but I'm looking forward to it.

Honestly, going into this tournament I didn't really know what to expect. I was barely playing any tennis, just

trying to see how the knee is this week and try to play as much as possible. Yeah, here I am making my best result at the French, so maybe I should practice less (laughing).

But, yeah, I'll give it my all. I'll see how it is. Hopefully the knee is good tomorrow for the match. Yeah, we'll see. It's nice to put yourself in these situations.

Q. I'm wondering if you spoke with Felix and what are your comments on the situation in his season?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: I think he's okay. Yeah, he played really well at the end of last year and last year in general. So it's never easy to have such a good season and then come back the next year with expectations and a lot of noise around you. If he's not feeling at 100%, he's got some physical issues, it's difficult.

I feel for him in that sense, but I think he's fine. He's such a young player. It's just something that you have to go through. I think every player goes through it. Yeah, he's going to be fine. He's an amazing talent. He's a great player.

The year is very long, so for sure -- to me, I think for him the most important thing is to be healthy. If he's healthy, he's always going to produce and play great tennis and be a big threat.

Q. There's obviously people who have been talking about you the last few years as a super talented player. Do you feel any growing pressure from tournament to tournament that now is the time for you to step up and win the slam everyone said that you would win one day?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, there's a lot of pressure. In general whenever you have results, then you get expectations and then there's a lot of pressure behind it. That's why I said, you know, I respect Alcaraz a lot because he's been able to deal with the noise very well thus far.

Yeah, he's not just handling it. He's really enjoying being in that situation, you know, which I don't think everybody really does. So it's just something I've had to kind of learn to -- or learning still, not to focus too much on the results.

For better or for worse, you know, having an injury, it's obviously not great. But having a week like this week where there's zero expectations because I'm just coming to see how I am physically, that's almost when you produce your best tennis, you know, when you play with zero expectations.

So that's kind of a lesson to myself and how I have to kind of keep going. Not think too much, okay, because

I'm playing well or I have a certain result, now I need to keep it up. But I just need to focus on myself and try to do the best. I think the results come on their own.

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