

# Roland Garros

Friday, 9 June 2023

Paris, France

## Novak Djokovic

### Press Conference

N. DJOKOVIC/C. Alcaraz

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

THE MODERATOR: Congrats, Novak. Bad luck to Carlos today. Do you have a few words for him, or what did you exchange at the end of the match today?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I told him that he's got plenty of time, and that I'm sure he's gonna win Roland Garros multiple times in the future. I have no doubt about it. I mean, he's amazing player. Just possesses so much qualities, so dynamic, so much power in his shots, very complete player.

He already has won a Grand Slam. He's the youngest ever No. 1 in the history of the game. You know, there is a lot to be excited about for him, you know, for the future.

But of course, you know, not the best way to end the match for him, but respect for him for hanging in there until the last point, really. It was obvious that he was struggling with his movement. It's unfortunate for the crowd, it's unfortunate for the match of this importance for both of us, but that's sport. You know, it happens when you play on extremely high intensity as we both did I think for the first two sets. It was so even.

It was, you know, very demanding physically for both of us, and things like that physically, cramps or whatever he was struggling with, can happen. That's it. You know, I wish him fast recovery. I'm sure he will be back strong.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

**Q. Carlos was just in here, and he said, basically said he was completely overwhelmed by the stress and tension of the moment, of facing you on this big stage. I was curious if you had ever experienced something like that, physical reactions when you were young in your career, to stressful moments against great players and how you get over it?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I have. I have experienced that several times. Early in my career I was struggling quite a bit physically. You know, I can understand, you know, the emotions and circumstances that affect you mentally and emotionally.



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You know, being in one of the greatest tournaments of the world, maybe for the first time in his career he was expected to win. You know, he was maybe not an underdog, you know, chasing the title and trying to win against a favorite, but it was probably the other way around. So maybe that affected him, you know, and as he said, it probably did.

But it's a part of the learning curve. It's part of the experience. He's only 20, you know. So he's got plenty of time. He's showed so much maturity in the last couple of years. He appeared on the scene, you know, just few years ago, winning his first title, and only a year later he wins his first Grand Slam and he becomes No. 1.

You know, I have tremendous respect for that, and, you know, he's got a great coach, great team of people around him. You know, the career will be his, his career will be very successful if he manages obviously to keep healthy, because the game is there.

**Q. You have been booed by the public several times, including when you won the second games off Carlos in the third set. How do you react to that?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I don't mind (smiling). It's not the first; probably not the last. I'll just keep winning.

**Q. I'm sure you won't want to get into details but you looked like you were also struggling with something on your side. Are you sure you will be 100% for the final, or is it something new, something you're worried about?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Look, as I said, the intensity was extremely high for the first two sets, so we both felt it, you know, in the legs. We both felt it also the way the energy levels were maybe not as high.

The beginning of the third set was I think key for me to hang on, and something unexpected happened. I think nobody really expected him to experience these cramps, and obviously from that moment onwards it was a different match.

For me, I just tried to stay there, stay present, you know, make him play. That's it. You know, he couldn't move, you know, as well as he was doing for first two sets.

So of course it was not great for the crowd, you know, to



experience such a match. That was completely different to what they have seen for two sets, but it is what it is.

**Q. So for the first two sets it was a really physical battle. After that, the injury happened and the crowd was getting involved. There was history on the line for you. How did all of this play into your mind? Can you just describe what was going on for you through all this.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I don't think experience can be a decisive factor in matches like this. It can help maybe manage your emotions or energy expenditure, I would say, but it's not gonna win you a match. I mean, you have to really come out with a clear game plan, with right execution.

So that's what I tried to do, and I think the quality of my tennis today was really high, and best match of the tournament, came at the right time.

I put myself again in a position to fight for another Grand Slam trophy. I've been very fortunate that most of the matches in tournaments I've played in the last few years, there is history on the line.

I like the feeling. It's a privilege. It's incredible privilege to be able to make history of the sport that I truly love, and it has given me so much.

The motivation is very high, as you can imagine. There is one more to go, and hopefully get my hands on the trophy.

**Q. You have a lot of experience at this level. You feel the battle. You feel how the opponent play with you. Did you sense coming from Carlos at the end of the second set? He told us that he start cramping in his arm. Did you feel something coming or were you 100% in your bubble and not focused on that?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I did not feel anything coming, honestly. Normally you look across the net, you know what's happening and everything. I was struggling myself a little bit physically towards the end of the second set, and, you know, I didn't play such a great game at 6-5 for him. I had my chances in 5-All breakpoint. Yeah, he played a really good game. Broke my serve at love. He won a set.

After that, you know, I just wanted to change my clothes, take a little bit of a toilet break and come back and try to restart, which happened. But then I felt the first couple of games again he was there.

Then I noticed maybe, yeah, last two points of the second game of the third set that he started doing something with his hand. And then, you know, obviously when I won the game point in the second game of the

third set I saw him cramping in his leg. That's when I really noticed. I hadn't noticed before because he was striking the ball well, he was moving great, so I didn't feel there was much happening in the end of the second.

**Q. We know you love records. Sunday you will play your 34th Grand Slam final, which is as much as Chris Evert. Obviously you will play for the 23rd Grand Slam. But you could also become the first man with three victories in each Grand Slam. I'm wondering which one of all these marks, and I forgot many, is the craziest to you?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Which one is what?

**Q. The craziest.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Craziest? (Laughter.)

I wouldn't say crazy. I would say just extremely, I would say, inspiring and motivating. Of course I'm proud of all my achievements, and, you know, I try to stay present and stay in the moment. I know the job is not finished and we have another match.

Obviously this was a big win today under the circumstances that were obviously a little bit strange, especially in the third and fourth. But a win is a win. I have said it many times this year that during the clay season that Roland Garros is where I want to peak on clay, where I want to play my best tennis.

So I put myself in another really ideal position to win a Grand Slam. That's basically what still drives me when I wake up in the morning and think about the season and think about things I want to achieve. The Grand Slams are what drives me the most.

I won the first Grand Slam this year, and now I'm in the finals of a second one, so I couldn't ask for more than that.

As far as all the records that are on the line, again, it's flattering, it's great, but, you know, I need to win, you know, in order to make sure to be on that list.

So I know what I need to do. With my team, we are still locked in. It's great, but we are already thinking about the next opponents, and hopefully get a title.

**Q. This might be a question for Sunday, but given everything you just said and history being on your mind, you're asked a lot about 23 and how motivating that number and beyond is for you, but I'm just wondering whether the calendar slam is somewhere in your mind at all.**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Calendar slam is really far. But maybe it won't be that far if I win on Sunday. But let's

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see.

You know, I'm not thinking about calendar slam. I'm thinking really just to win another Grand Slam title here on Sunday, and I'm so close. I know it. I know the feeling. I've had this feeling quite a few times in my career. So I know how I need to handle myself, my emotions, my day tomorrow, and after tomorrow, and to approach the finals in the best possible way.

I will play someone that already has been in a Grand Slam finals, either Casper Ruud or Zverev, they both played in finals but they never won a title.

But again, experience on my side, but does it win matches? I don't think so. I just have to recover well, be prepared for another long battle, and, you know, after the finals, if I win, let's talk about history (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

**Q. 23, that's a dream for you to hold this record alone. And you almost succeeded in winning the Grand Slam in a calendar year, the four Grand Slams. You felt a lot of pressure on that day. This time you might win a 23rd title. Now, this is going to be more pressure on you on Sunday. Are you certain you can mention this?**

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Pressure is always on my shoulders, so it's not going to be different. But it's part of my sport, part of my life, all that I do. I think that having pressure is a privilege. But it's a source of motivation, as well. Great motivation to play well and to reach Sunday.

Before the tournament I was saying that of course for me Roland Garros is a Grand Slam, and it's the most important tournament on this surface. So I was well-prepared so that I would be in this position so that I would be ready for this battle, battle to win this other Grand Slam title.

I hope that I'll play my best tennis level on Sunday. The only thing I can say now is that I'm very focused. History is always something that's hovering over me, but I'm very happy to be in this position to write history of this sport, but I'm just thinking about winning the next match.

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