

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Casper Ruud

Press Conference

C. RUUD/A. Zverev

6-3, 6-4, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: Congrats, Casper. Your third final in the last five Grand Slam events, which is remarkable. Talk about the challenge on Sunday against Novak going for history.

CASPER RUUD: Thank you. Yeah, it's going to be tough, for sure. He's playing for his 23rd. I'm playing for my first. So I'm going to just try to play without pressure and just try to enjoy the moment.

I think that was my mentality last year, as well, and it didn't go my way. Obviously I would like to try to do better than last year. Let's see if I have learned something from the two previous ones that I played last year.

It just feels great to be back. I didn't think or necessarily believe in the beginning of the tournament that I was going to be in the final. I gave it my best, of course, in every match. Took one match at a time.

Tomorrow is going to be toughest challenge of the year for me, for sure -- sorry, on Sunday, to play Novak. We're going to do our best to be ready and play our best level.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. Congratulations making second consecutive final at Roland Garros. You're facing a formidable adversary with whom you have 0-4 record without winning a single set. Have you been able to watch the match today, and can you make any deductions which could be useful for you for Sunday?

CASPER RUUD: I didn't watch like everything. I watched some here and there. Obviously you're following to see when you have to warm up and stuff.

It was, in the end, unfortunate for Carlos that he started to struggle with cramps and these things I think he was. Looked like it was going to be a really, really tough and long match. And, yeah, I think Novak has played great this tournament, and in the Grand Slams, he always



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raises his level.

So it's going to be a tough challenge. I have never beaten him before. So I'm going to have to try to come up with a better game plan and just know I'm going to have to play my best game, my A game, my best level that I've ever played if I want to have a chance against him.

I'm going to try to do that, and try to play without too much pressure. That's sort of what I did today, just went out, didn't think too much, didn't want to show too many emotions, either good or bad ones. I was just in the zone. Let's see if I can keep this sort of feeling and mentality in for the final.

Q. You just said a couple of times you want to play without pressure on Sunday. Could you explain a little bit more about what that means for you and how do you keep that part of it out of your mind and just focus on winning a match?

CASPER RUUD: I think it's just a matter of not thinking like, I "need" to win this match, there's a really big "need" for me to win this match. This is a word that I try to sort of avoid. Obviously in the beginning of the tournament, that's sort of what you feel more and what you think about more, like this is important to try to get this win and get going in the tournament.

But now I'm in the final. It's been a great two weeks no matter what happens on Sunday, and I'm going to of course give it my all, but sometimes you play your best tennis when you don't think too much. It just goes on automatic mode.

If you always think, like, oh, I'm close to winning or you can sort of tense up and you can be nervous. Maybe that's what happened with Carlos today, I'm not sure. But when you're thinking too much and feeling pressure, maybe you're not able to breathe in the proper way and calm your body, it's easy to stress and overthink the situation.

Just going to try to go out there and know that it's going to be a long match, marathon match, and play point by point, give it my all, and let's see how that goes.

Q. Congratulations. When people are on top form, at the top of their game, we often say they are in "rude health." Are you in "Ruud health" right now?

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CASPER RUUD: I think this and the quarterfinal match was one of the best matches that I played this year, so that's, you know, good confidence boost going into the final. I know that I'm gonna have to play similar or even better if I want to have any chance.

Yeah, probably playing the best tennis of the year so far. It's been a tough one, but this sort of changes a little bit everything and how the year has been going. I'm gonna see if I can try to use last year's defeat in the final as a motivation and sort of, yeah, extra, extra motivation to try to play well on Sunday.

Q. Congratulations. It looks like a kind of demonstration on the court. Did you feel that when you were playing that you are in total control?

CASPER RUUD: Not necessarily. I think second set was very important. First set I started great, but, you know, even though you win the first set, the match is far from over.

But I did a big, big hold on 1-2 down in the second. I was Love-40 and looked like he was going to break me. I was able to hold my serve there and break him and not the following game but in the next service game and get a break and serve well throughout the second set.

When you're 2-0 up, you don't relax but it's sort of like, I have the lead now, I'm going to try to play a little bit more freely. If I do some mistakes it's fine, I still have the lead no matter what happens.

Yeah, I think in the end was obviously very nice to go out and serve at 5-0. It's much more comfortable than 5-4 or 6-5 serving. You know you have more chances if you were to get broken.

Everything sort of went my way in the third set. I did some, like, points where I did a lot of lobs and he was missing some overheads and then I did some good passings and I was serving great. In the end I felt very comfortable in a way, but you can never know. Even though you're 5-Love up, things can change.

With tennis it's not over until it's over. I was trying to stay focused and finish the match in a good way with a nice forehand winner.

Q. You said that you played your best tennis of the year. Do you feel a change physically and mentally since the beginning of the tournament?

CASPER RUUD: Fell a change, what? Sorry?

Q. Physically, mentally? Do you feel different? Do you feel better?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I think it's easier the longer you go on, of course, you can see the sort of now I'm in the final, so I'm going to go out there, and when I go out there the trophy is going to be there. It's going to be, whoa, different feeling.

But I'm just going to try to play without, like I said earlier, too much emotion. I think that's when I can play my best tennis when I don't overthink the situation and think too much that I have to win this match, because then things go on automatic mode. When you play in practice that's sort of when I think many players can play very, very good when they are thinking that this is just, you know, a practice match or whatever, it's sort of easier to play calmly. That's my goal.

But, yeah, of course if I was to maybe win a set or be closer to victory, you're going to feel the nerves and then it's important to be mentally prepared. Yeah, I'm going to try to visualize myself in both winning and losing situation on Sunday and see if I can have a game plan ready.

Q. You have spoken quite a bit just now about the mental side of things going into Sunday. I'm wondering, is there anything you learned with regard to your preparation and how you'll spend this time between the semifinal and the final, whether it's strategizing or the way you practice, the amount of sleep you get? Anything at all you think you might do differently this time because you learned something through your other two experiences in Grand Slam finals?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I think it's important to be physically ready. That's the most important thing. I mean, you don't want to sort of not being able to play your best if you're physically not ready in a way, if you have pain or tired. My preparation has already started. Started one hour ago when I went on the bike, cooled down, I went in the ice bath to recover the muscles. Recovery has already started and thinking ahead for Sunday.

Mentally I'm just going to enjoy a good night's sleep tonight. I think sleep is very important. Any time you can get eight, nine, or even ten hours of sleep, that's great. I'm going to try to do that. It's going to be late tonight obviously, but tonight and tomorrow I'm going to try to sleep well and just enjoy the fact that I'm in the final.

Then when I wake up on Sunday, I'm going to probably not talk too much to too many people around. Just going to stay in my bubble and see if I can bring my A game. That's only a few times a year you have the chance to play final of a slam. So you better make it worth it. I'm going to try to, like I said, bring my best physical and mental tactical and, yeah, game and game plan for Sunday.

