

Roland Garros

Saturday, 10 June 2023

Paris, France

Andy Lapthorne

Donald Ramphadi

Press Conference

LAPTHORNE-RAMPHADI/Davidson-Shaw

1-6, 6-2, 10-3

THE MODERATOR: Congrats. We will have questions for the champions, then, please.

Q. Hi, guys. Congratulations. How does it feel like to call yourselves Grand Slam champion now?

ANDY LAPTHORNE: Yeah. Amazing. Donald's first slam win on his birthday. First time we've played together. New partnership. Whole different vibe and great guy to play with, great guy to be around.

To be able to help him deliver his first Grand Slam, I think he's the first African player to win a Grand Slam at the French Open from our division. Yeah, amazing achievement for him. Just really pleased for him and he deserves it because he put me on his back today and carried me, because I was fairly ropey in the first set.

Just trying to be solid in the 10-point breaker. I hate those things. But he stepped up and won it for us. All credit to him. His first slam. Yeah, he deserves it.

DONALD RAMPHADI: Yeah, I'm excited and especially it's a big present for me for my birthday since it's my birthday today. I'm very excited that finally I won the Grand Slam (smiling). It's a great feeling.

Yeah, thanks to Andy for putting that in me. He was like a great leader in court. He would even tell me to drink water. That's how he was in court.

So thanks. Thanks for being there for me and thanks for putting that in me.

Yeah, I'm very excited. I don't want to lie. I don't really have like too much words, but excited.

Q. Andy, how inspired were you by the scenes in Prague on Wednesday night?

ANDY LAPTHORNE: Yeah, a bit of a weird one. I was absolutely fuming with the tournament referee here. He's



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not going to hear the end of that for a long time, because he didn't let me know that we wouldn't be playing on the day of the game.

If I would have known that, I would have been on a plane to Prague. So I wasn't too happy when the schedule came out, when was it, Wednesday. But we won. That's all that matters, and I was absolutely buzzing.

I go to most games, home and away, and been going with my dad and my brother for donkey's years and we've never won anything. To see my dad and my brother get to experience that on Wednesday was very special, very emotional. Because it's a massive commitment when you follow a football club all over the place.

Yeah, just amazing. I can't wait to get home to celebrate that. Was inspiring and just so pleased for everyone involved.

It's been a long time coming. Yeah, it was amazing. To see the amount of numbers that came out for the parade, that just shows you how much it means to so many people.

Q. How much notice would you have needed to have got to Prague? Maybe the Monday or the Sunday?

ANDY LAPTHORNE: So we thought that we would be -- so I played Wednesday morning, and then I thought we were going to play doubles Thursday. If he would have told me within I guess an hour of coming off court on Wednesday that we weren't going to be playing on Thursday, I would have been on a plane to Prague.

Some people might think that's crazy, but I would have been there and I would have gone -- listen, two of my mates got to go, they took my tickets. They loved it. Look, if I would have gone they would have probably lost because every cup final I've been to they lost. So it's not a bad thing.

The main thing was the boys got the job done, got the win. We're back in Europe again last year, so I'll be going and following the team all over the place again and complaining about disabled access in places like Serbia and stuff again.

Yeah, I look forward to it. Yeah, it's great to be in a position now where I've won a trophy as well. It's been a

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really good week.

Q. Andy, did you manage to get to some of the other games in Europe? If so, which ones?

ANDY LAPTHORNE: Yeah, we went to Anderlecht earlier on in the season in the group stages. My friends have been to every game, home and away. Last year I went over to Lyon for the quarterfinals. Been to Seville. I've been pretty much everywhere. When I can get there I will be there.

This is the only thing that stops me being at games. I've missed some big ones over the years, but that's probably the biggest one I've missed. Look, this is what we do for a job. We know what we sign up for when we get into this.

Yeah, they're my two main loves. I absolutely love going to watch West Ham play, and watching them win was amazing on Wednesday night.

Q. Do you know any of the players?

ANDY LAPTHORNE: Declan Rice sent me a message in the past after I won the US Open. All those guys are really good guys. Billy McKinlay is a good guy. I know his daughter very well, and good friends with that family. They're all good guys, and I think you can see by the scenes on Wednesday and Thursday the connection between the players and the fans now.

I always think that that's the recipe for success, and I think it's going in the right direction. The league season wasn't great. It was frustrating. Look, we want to win trophies. We won a trophy. It's been amazing.

Q. Lapo, you've mentioned it's a hard slog following a football team, but it's also a hard slog getting your hands on a Grand Slam trophy. You said on social media yesterday yesterday's win made you find the love again. I mean, surely this has made you find the love even more?

ANDY LAPTHORNE: Yeah, I mean, it's been a tough few weeks in my personal life. Don't need to go into it, but it's been very difficult. This game sometimes has a way of reminding you why you love it.

And just when you need it, it usually comes good and shows you some love. That's what's happened this week. And obviously to pair up with Donald, someone that's so positive and has such a great outlook on life has been good for me. I can get down on myself, I can get negative, especially when things off the court aren't going the way I want them to go.

To be with someone that's so positive and has a great outlook on life has been really good for me.

Q. Donald, this is a partnership you are hoping to continue. How are the cockney lessons going? You know, sometimes, you know...

DONALD RAMPHADI: Yeah, yeah, I mean, it's tough on me to hear some words that he says. But yeah, we came with a strategy, because sometimes when you say you, me, like I don't understand if he said me or you.

But yeah, we came up with a strategy. I said, Bro, you need to call my name. So every time when it's my ball he calls Donald. Then obviously I know my name (smiling).

It's going well, so yeah, yeah.

Q. Just finally, you have said this is going to be an established partnership. Could I just establish whether in this partnership, as it establishes, we're going to continue going to match tiebreak, or are we going to win some first sets too?

ANDY LAPTHORNE: We're going to try not to. I spent January watching Andy play for 20 hours each match. I don't really want to be in that situation myself too much. But look, whatever we need to do to get the wins is what we will do.

Q. Obviously we're at the venue where the Paralympics is next year. Is that something in mind, keeping you going in terms of your career? Also, is the timing tricky with the US Open next year?

ANDY LAPTHORNE: Yeah. I'm probably not the right person to ask because it's quite a controversial opinion, but I think the players should have been given the option, do you want to play US Open or do you want to play the Paralympics. Some people don't agree with that.

We wasn't asked the question. There was no option. There is no US Open next year, which is tough. I think there's got to be a way around this stuff, because you lose a slam every four years, which I don't know, there's got to be a way. Whether you play week one, qualifying, or something like that, there has to be a way to make sure there's a US Open champion each year, and if not, then give the players the option.

Obviously the Paralympics is big and winning here and playing well here is important, because we're going to come back here next year and we want to win during the Paralympics. But for me at my stage of my career, the big thing is Grand Slams now.

So to have no US Open next year is difficult to take. I don't really know what's happened there. We've only just found out this week that that's not going to be happening. And there's not been any discussions to try and find a way, even if you're not directly planning when the US

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Open is on, to make sure there's a champion for that year because it seems pretty weird that on the honors board every four years there's no winner.

I don't know who you would ask or whatever there, but I'm fairly certain there could have been a way to get it done and all the guys would have been there, even if it means traveling and stuff like that. Like, the guys want to play slams.

At the end of the day, we're trying to earn a living, as well. So when you take one of the slams away, it's a big slice of earning potential that you're losing as well.

So, yeah, I don't know who you would ask, but my thoughts were straightaway when they said it, was, well, why not play it during qualifying and then everyone just fly straight into Paris and then you play, like we play two or three days' notice like all the time.

So I'm fairly certain there is going to be a big buildup to Paris and stuff with holding camps and stuff like that. It's like, well, why couldn't we just have played in New York, and if all the top players are playing in New York at the same time and then flying over, no one's got a real advantage. That's a question for the powers that be.

But, yeah, looking forward to Paris next year and hoping to win some more medals. Playing here twice in one year is going to be special.

Q. Andy, on the football subject, you obviously travel the country watching West Ham. How is the disabled access at Premier League grounds? Could it be better, could it be improved? Which clubs need to be investing more perhaps for disabled access?

ANDY LAPTHORNE: I don't know. For me, it's got a lot better over the last, I think two or three years, it's got a lot better. Like you used to have situations where you went in the van and stuff, if you went in a wheelchair or whatever and stuff like that. It seems to be much improved across Premier League. Now I very rarely encounter any problems at any stadium. Yeah, I think they are doing a fairly good job, to be honest.

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