

# National Bank Open

Thursday, August 12, 2021

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

## Casper Ruud

### Press Conference



C. RUUD/D. Lajovic

6-4, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Great win today. I have to ask, after the match you signed the camera, you said "Hard courts" with a smiley face. Was that in reaction to any one player in specific or just the general theme of people only thinking you're good on clay?**

CASPER RUUD: Oh, more the general. I mean, I have seen a lot of people, you know, probably questioning my ability to play on hard court, so just thought it was funny to write a little note. It was not to someone specific.

I think it's fun to play on hard courts, you know. Even though I played most of my best results on clay, my best slam result is from this year Australian Open, so, I mean, I think it's a surface that also can suit my game well even though this year has been mainly clay, clay, clay all the year.

So I think I'm motivated to come back to the hard courts. I have had two very good matches here. It's a great start for me to the hard-court swing, and we will play on the hard courts now for seven, eight months now so it's a very good start for me.

**Q. You said you like to play on hard court as well. Anything in particular that you have done to adapt your game to hard court? You said earlier you worked on your serve. Apart from the serve, your slice was working very well today. Anything you have done to change your game to adapt from clay to hard court?**

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I think there are many things you do to kind of change your game style, not too much but a little bit from clay to hard. You know, you can try to flatten out the shots a bit, maybe use the slice a bit more. You can block some returns here and there and come a little bit more to the net, something that, you know, I can definitely do more to try to come more to the net, but it's not the main

part of my game yet.

For now, I prefer to play the rallies from the baseline. But, yeah, like you said, to mix up with some slices can be good, to keep the ball low on the surface. I think the courts here are pretty fast this year, so it's definitely something I'm trying to do. Definitely to keep the ball low and to use the slice to mix up a little bit is a good way to play on hard courts, I think.

**Q. You obviously have an extremely impressive record this year, I think it's 37-9 and a 13-match winning streak. What do you think in particular has clicked this year or during the winning streak?**

CASPER RUUD: Well, I think just the whole year I have been able to produce, you know, steady tennis. I'm not, you know, the guy with the biggest game or the flashy shots. But, you know, just being steady, playing every points like it really matters I think has been working out well.

That's something that, you know, they are very strict on now at the Nadal Academy. That's kind of his mentality, to play every point like your life depends on it.

So that's something that I think is working out well, because many matches this year has only been decided by a couple of points. Many times they have gone to my favor. I have had some tough losses, as well. French Open this year, a very tight match I lost against Davidovich unfortunately for me in the end. Also in Wimbledon I lost a tight five-setter. So there have been some big matches that those points didn't go my way but also many matches where they did.

So of course for now I'm very happy with the season, and I'm on a 13-match winning streak. I'm trying to enjoy it. It's not probably many times in your career that you will experience something like it, so just try to enjoy it as much as you can and hope to keep it alive tomorrow.

It will be obviously very tough and the toughest opponent I have faced this year probably, No. 3 in the world, so that will be a big challenge.

**Q. About your match tomorrow, you played Stefanos**



**back in Madrid on the clay and you got the win there. You guys are both obviously amazing on clay. Does your game plan change at all now that it's coming to a hard court? You might not want to give away your secrets, but is there anything you look to do differently on a hard court, maybe a faster court, like you said, against Stefanos?**

CASPER RUUD: I think, you know, he's a great player on all surfaces, really. Really, he's won big titles on both clay and hard courts, and, you know, he won the Nitto ATP Finals in 2019, which shows he can definitely play well on this surface. I think he's played finals here also before. He's definitely a tough player on this surface.

But I think the plan will be similar to what I tried to do in Madrid. That's at least plan A. If that doesn't work, we will see maybe if I go to plan B or plan C. I don't know if I have more than three plans (laughter). Hopefully one of them will work.

But, yeah, he's a very good player. He has extremely good feeling on the ball, talented, moves well, serves well. I have to be on top of my game, and I was in Madrid, to be able to have a chance.

But at least I know that he's possible to beat. It will be obviously be very tough and I will, like I said, have to bring my A game, but at least I know I have been able to do it before, so that's something I will try to think about.

**Q. While serving, you don't keep the second ball in your pocket. It's a bit of, like, something unusual we don't see. Is there any reason you do that? Your second-serve win percentage is among the highest, in the top three in the world. Do you think, does it help you reset in a way? After you miss your first serve, you take a bit of time to get the second ball? Does it help in any way? What's the reason you do that?**

CASPER RUUD: Well, I actually started in Monte-Carlo this year. With the new line I got from Yonex, the shorts were actually a bit tight on the legs, so the ball started to fall out if I kept it in the pocket. So that's where it started.

During that time, I was playing well and also serving well in those weeks coming up or leading up to the French Open, so I just kept that routine, because I liked it and I felt like it was working well.

I could, you know, play with the ball in my pocket again now, but, you know, I had my best wins, my best tournaments of my career with what I was doing, so I just kept it. But I think it's also good, because in one way it kind of mentally makes you feel a little bit more pressure --

not pressure, but the need to make the first serve, because in a way, you kind of trick your brain to think that this is your last serve because you don't keep one in your pocket.

So I think it's been going well. It could be something like this, but it just started with a very simple thing, that the ball was falling out in Monte-Carlo when I kept it in the pocket because it was a bit too tight. So that was the start, and then I have kept doing it.

Yeah, it's not something you always see. I know some players do it, but mostly people like to keep it in their pockets.

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