

National Bank Open

Thursday, August 12, 2021

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

John Isner

Press Conference



J. ISNER/A. Rublev

7-5, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Great match today. You have obviously been playing super well of late. Looked like you handled Andrey's pace really well. Kept your balls deep. How did you feel out there today in general?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I felt pretty good. I thought the conditions were, again, a bit tough on center court. It's been a little bit swirly. I think we have seen that throughout the course of this tournament. I did know that Andrey was struggling with that.

He was a little bit, you know, off kilter from the very get-go, I think. I could tell he was, you know, exhibiting some frustration out there.

So when I knew that he was a bit rattled early on, I just told myself I had to be the one to keep a cooler head. I think that helped me prevail in the end.

Q. We have seen some of the other young guys in this tournament specifically on the same court struggle with that change of conditions. As a veteran player, what does it take to go out there, have different conditions than you might have expected, and then adapt your game to that? Some of the younger players seem to struggle with that a bit more.

JOHN ISNER: Well, I think for me, luckily I can still serve pretty well whether it's windy or not. If I'm taking care of my serve, you know, in the wind, I actually kind of like playing in the wind. I'm generally playing against incredible ball strikers, so if the ball is knuckling out there, it probably plays to my advantage a little bit. I think that's what happened today.

For me, it doesn't change. It was tough out there. It's challenging on your footwork. Even on slower balls you have really got to try to get in position, because the ball's

moving around and it's not easy. On TV it might, I guess, look a little ugly, but on the court it's real tough to play.

Again, I think it goes back to me keeping my head pretty good out there. That helped me a lot in the end.

Q. A couple days ago on Twitter you mentioned that Canada is one of the best tournaments out there. What do you enjoy about coming up here?

JOHN ISNER: Well, I mean, it's an amazing country. Whether it's here or Montreal, you're in two amazing cities. You know, this year we don't get to, of course, experience the city as much, but the site here is awesome.

The fans on center court, what they are allowing are great. Every year, whether it's, again, here or Montreal, you know you're going to get a great atmosphere, good weather, you know, very avid tennis fans.

It just makes for a very good event. For me especially, I love playing in, you know, North America. Obviously we're in a different country, but it feels like the States here, and I like that.

Q. I know you got to know Jason Spezza over the years. He's a guy in Toronto who has done an excellent job later in his career being really effective for the Leafs. We always talk about the younger guys being hungry, but I think there's something to be said about guys later in their career finding the little things they need to do to be successful and keep going. What have you done, do you think, well to do that?

JOHN ISNER: Well, I think I have taken care of myself very well. I rarely take a day completely off, and that's even if it's a travel day after playing lots and lots of tennis. I just know how my body reacts when I take some time off, and it's not a good thing.

Now, I'm not afraid to take time off the tennis court, but I've got to keep my body moving other ways, whether that's on a stationary bike, I pull out a stationary bike and ride it outside in my yard in the heat to get a good sweat, or go to the gym and lift weights with my trainer. That's stuff that I feel is not actually taxing on my body but it keeps my body feeling good.



I just, much like Spezza, I was actually texting with him, and he tried to come out to my first match but he was skating. So that's his job, and that's what he does and he takes care of himself and keeps himself in good shape, and I feel like I do the exact same thing.

At 36, I really do feel every bit as good as I did eight, ten years ago.

Q. I was going to ask you about Jason, like, when you hung out with him or you talked to him, what stood out?

JOHN ISNER: Well, yeah, I got to know him when he was playing for the Stars. Just a nice guy, a family guy. We all know that. It's good for him to come back and play at home.

Experience has been different with not having all the loyal Leafs fans watching him play, but he's definitely had a renaissance. He played extremely well last year, so he's enjoying it. He's still super committed.

I remember the last time the tournament was here what, three years ago, whatever it was, I was playing on the outside courts and he was sitting on the soccer bleachers watching me. It was pretty cool. That match wasn't the feature match, let's put it that way, and there was like 15 people watching and Spezza's one of them. That's pretty cool. He's a good guy.

Q. I know you're a big Hurricanes fan. What do you make of the offseason they've had? Big changes. Dougie Hamilton leaving. You have an ex-Leaf now. What do you make of the Canes' offseason?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I think people are actually -- you know, I think the quick judgment is to say they haven't had a good offseason. I sort of disagree with that.

The Leafs got Mrazek. Carolina has Freddy Andersen. Carolina also got Raanta from the Coyotes. So I think if those guys can deploy a good time share to keep them both healthy, they have a great team in front of them.

I think both those guys can play well. As we know, Carolina is a very deep team, talented team. They still have a lot of money to spend right now, which not many people are mentioning. They are quite a bit under the cap and we'll see what they can do.

Q. Just a question about your match against Rublev. You have played him now three times, only lost one set against him. Curious about what his game or your

game makes that such a great matchup for you.

JOHN ISNER: I don't really know if it's a situation where it's a good matchup for me. The first time we played, I really don't put any stock into that because he was very, very young and that was a long time ago.

In Madrid I realized I was very fortunate to win that match. He was the much better player and I got very lucky that day. So I know that.

I think today maybe I was just a little bit better than him. I think for me, I really do believe I can beat a lot of players out there, and I knew the conditions today were tricky, but my serve was on and the court was fast. I knew from the get-go I was sort of giving him trouble.

I think it's just a situation where, yeah, I've gotten the better of him three times, but it's not because it's a good matchup or anything like that. I've just maybe gotten a little bit luckier.

Q. I noticed today it seemed like he was using two different racquets against you.

JOHN ISNER: I noticed that, yeah.

Q. Have you ever had somebody play like that against you?

JOHN ISNER: I don't think so. I can't remember that, and I don't even -- was he doing that in the tiebreaker, as well? I wasn't paying too much attention to that, but I did know that after he would serve he would go to his bench and change his racquet.

One was obviously tighter. Maybe he was serving with the looser racquet, returning with the tighter one. I don't know what he was. He had a little system going there, but I guess it is what it is.

Q. Up next for you, as you mentioned on the court, either Tiafoe or Gael. Can you just talk a little bit about the challenge each of those players presents?

JOHN ISNER: Well, yeah, they both are going to bring a lot of flair, a lot of athleticism to the court. They are two great showmen, in my opinion. Both really good for the game.

Gael I have played a ton of times. I think off the top of my head, 11 or 12 times we have played. I'm very familiar with his game.

Frances, I think we have played a couple times. I'm still

very familiar with his game, because we practice with each other and we are good friends. I'm also good friends with Gael.

I don't know who's going to win. I think it's going to be a very, very good match later this afternoon. But I know I'm going to have my hands full. But also, I know that it's going to be a very, very fun match. I'm going to look forward to it.

Q. I think you are wearing a Masters hat right now?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah.

Q. As more of a veteran in the sport, Phil Mickelson winning the PGA, what was your take on that?

JOHN ISNER: That was very cool. I mean, golf is a sport where that definitely can happen. We saw Tom Watson years ago win the British Open at like 56, and Mickelson winning the PGA at 50 is very cool.

Tennis lately is one of the, whereas other sports you've seen a really, really big youth movement, I'm talking maybe even the NHL, players that get into their, you know, 30, 31, maybe start to decline a little bit. NBA, baseball, same thing. Where tennis is going quite the opposite actually, which is very cool to -- I mean, I'm an example of that. Of course Federer, Djokovic, Nadal, all these guys, those guys are the main examples.

But, yeah, to me it makes perfect sense. You learn how to, you know, eat right, train right, sleep right, do all these things, there's no reason why you can't do great things in sports into your 30s, late 30s. I think that's what we are seeing especially in tennis, because I know how incredibly professional everyone is in this sport.

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