

National Bank Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Alexander Zverev

Press Conference

A. ZEVREV/A. Popyrin

6-7, 6-4, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: First of all, congrats, Sascha. This is your first time in the semifinal in Toronto. You've won in Montreal before, but how does it feel to get into semifinal here for the first time?

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: It's good. Actually quite satisfied with the level today. I thought it was a high-level match. Alexei plays the best tennis of his life in Canada, obviously, every year. So, yeah, all-in-all, I think it was a good performance.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Just, as the tournament's kind of been going on, how have you been feeling the ball, and how have you been progressing? The other night after the retirement, getting that late night practice, how has that evolved as the week's gone on?

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: Yeah, today was definitely the first time I actually felt the ball well on the racquet. I know that the conditions can fit me very well. I know that. It's a fast court, the balls are fast. But I need to get used to it. I need to get the rhythm with these balls.

So, I'm happy that I'm slowly starting to do that, hopefully. Yeah, if I continue doing that, in the semifinals maybe even play a bit better, I have confidence in what's going to happen this week.

Q. There was a little frustration at the end of the first set. What's your process to reset, and how big is that for you to be able to park that after that moment?

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: Well, a few years ago it would have been a broken racquet, for sure. But I don't break racquets any more. The last time I broke a racquet was two, I think three and a half years ago, that was the last time I broke a racquet. I'm not planning on changing that.



But, yeah, it was necessary to get it out somehow, because it was a set full of opportunities I feel like. And a lot of unlucky moments also on my side, especially the set point. I mean, the let court was extremely unlucky. Yeah, just had to let it out and move on.

Q. Bigger picture, some of the other big players on tour skip Canada, they have the last few years. You've been here the last three years, you won here a few years ago. Why is it important for you to be here, and why do you circle this on your schedule before Cincinnati and the US Open?

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: Well, I lost first round Wimbledon, so I had a month off. That's probably the number one reason.

At the end of the day, it's still a Masters 1000, and I think these are the biggest tournaments that we have on the ATP Tour. We're fighting for big things here. It's a privilege to play in these kind of events. Yeah, I think it's not beneficial for top players that it's a two-week event now.

But all-in-all, I had quite a lot of time off. I could rest for a week completely without doing anything, and then I had a lot of time to train. So it was, yeah, it was a good thing for me to play here.

Q. Can you pinpoint the change between first and second and third in terms of tactics, because clearly you became more aggressive, and you served better, but was there something that you started doing in the second and third that you just didn't see in the first?

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: I found my return position on the second serve, I feel like. In the first set I was still searching for it. I was maybe a bit deeper in the court, but I was hitting the ball a lot harder from that position, and then moving forward and kind of taking the game into my own hands, which, that worked.

But, generally speaking, I don't think the first set was bad, I think it was quite high level of tennis from both of us. I knew if I continued playing that way, and I adjust a few things, I'm going to get my chances. I did that today, and obviously satisfied with the outcome.



Q. Can I get a perspective, just being Australian, of Alexei and where you see him as part of a big group of players who are trying to emerge to the next level. You've beaten him four times now, he brings enormous assets to the tennis court, but can I get your own observations of playing him.

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: I think I said it kind of on the court already, he feels very comfortable here in Canada, so he needs to analyze what it is and why that is. If he can get that same level and that same quality of tennis to the rest of the tour, he can be a top-10, top-8 player, fighting to qualify for Turin. Because he showed that this week. He beat Medvedev, he beat Holger Rune, he beat so many great players. Last year he won the tournament.

So there is something here in Canada that he finds that brings out the best in him. If he can analyze it and take that to the rest of the year, he has a massive game, he can fight for big things. He can fight for making Turin, he can fight for being constantly a top-10 player.

But he needs to analyze what it is and why that is. Because the difference in level is just too big, right? Between when he's playing really well, like he is here, and when he's not playing so well. So if he can narrow that down a little bit, there's no reason why he cannot be a top player.

Q. What's changed about controlling your temper since the last time you broke a racquet, and has that made you a better player, or does it have any relevance at all?

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: A few things. One is about taking responsibility of who you are as a person. Number one thing, I've said it before, but I'm a father now, so I want to be a good example there.

Also, you know, I want to be remembered for my tennis. I want to be remembered for what I've achieved on the court, for what I've done on the tennis court.

Also for the good things I do outside the tennis court as well. Because I feel like there's quite a lot of work that I do with my foundation, and with my family as well, which can be beneficial and helps people around the world. So I would much rather be known and remembered for that than the outbursts that I used to have, right? Yeah, that's just something that at some point it just comes.

It came with Roger as well. Roger used to have outbursts like crazy, and then he changed, he became Roger Federer, he became this perfection that we all know him as

now. But it wasn't always that case. But, yeah, something in the mind clicked and decided to, yeah, to be different on the court.

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