

Omnium Banque Nationale

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Casper Ruud

Press Conference

H. HURKACZ/C. Ruud

5-7, 6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You were up one set, one break. Can you explain what happened after that?

CASPER RUUD: Well, yeah, like you said, a set and a break, nothing more than 1-0 only. So it wasn't like I was serving for the match or anything. But it's frustrating, of course, when you feel like you're in lead, you're in control.

Hubert hit some really good returns there to break back. I was a double-fault here, maybe a sloppy mistake there. Made some stupid choices. I can blame myself for that. So, yeah, it's frustrating.

But Hubert is a great hard court player. I think that the first set didn't go as I expected when he was up a break. He sort of gave it away the other way around in the way that he was up a break and gave it away to me.

The first set was a bit surprising that I was able to win, to be honest. I didn't expect to be in the 7-5, 1-0 position when I was 3-0 down in the first set. But he did some sloppy mistakes, then he kind of erased those and played some beautiful winners and beautiful games.

Yeah, he had a level that I couldn't keep up with from 7-5, 1-0. So I just have to accept it and try to look back at it and find a better solution if I play him again.

Q. We all know you're one of the best players on clay. With this final in Miami, semifinal here, do you feel you can also be one of the best players in the world on hard court?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I mean, I think in the end the media are too focused on if you're a clay court player or hard court player. I mean, at the end of the day it's just tennis, the lines are the same, the measurements are the same.



Yeah, the surface is different, but you have people that media will call clay court players that suddenly are doing well in hard court, and everyone is like, Whoa, what is going on?

I mean, Rafa has won Wimbledon twice, he has won US Open four times, Australian Open two times. We all know that he's the greatest clay court player that is. I think the media is making names and calling you this or that too early sometimes.

I never looked at myself as a clay court specialist. Even though I prefer to play on the surface, yes, I also like playing on hard court. I mean, I feel I can do good results. I think I've proven it this year with Miami and this tournament that I'm able to win some matches against good players on hard court as well.

Yeah, I guess I will not consider myself the best in the world on hard court or thinking that I can be the best in the world on only hard court because there are many good hard court players that are better than me. Yeah, I realize that I can do good results on the surface.

Q. Could you talk to us about the relationship between your serve and your return. During the first set it looked like you had his number, especially on the second serve when he was trying to serve and volley. Things changed in the second and third set.

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I was hitting my spots better in the first set with the return, for sure. Coming from behind, Love-3 down, I just said that if I want to have a chance in this set, I need to do something very good with my returns because he is a great server. I was able to do it. I did some great winners with the return, making a lot of the first serves back.

I was returning better in the first set for sure than the second and third. I wish I could keep it up. But Hubert still went aggressive. Even though I passed him a couple times on serve and volley, he still went for it. I think I have to give credit to him for doing that. When you do serve-volley and the returner is doing some winners like I was able to do, it's not easy to keep doing it, but he did. So creds to him.

When you're standing that far back as I am, I am vulnerable to people who are serving and volleying. I know that. We've seen it with other players also, that it can be tough to pass when you're that far behind. This is something I need to improve on this surface, to try to step in more.

I tried it a little bit, but I'm not too comfortable with it yet. I will keep trying and hopefully improve that part of my game.

Q. Yesterday you said something interesting after your match about how you imagine yourself on the court. Is it something that you do all the time, and if you work with somebody that helps you with that?

CASPER RUUD: It's not something I do every match. Maybe some particular matches, yes, I do it, especially when I know I will be playing on big center courts with full crowds. It's not something that comes very natural to me because I didn't do it too many times in my career.

It's just a way of me feeling comfortable in that scenario, that at least I've done it one more time in my head when I'm visualizing maybe the night before.

I did it also a little bit today, but that doesn't mean every time I will do it even though I think it's a good thing for me to do.

It is something I have worked on with a mental coach from Norway that I worked with since I was 14, 15. We stopped working after last season. So, yeah, I've had help with that for seven, eight years of my career.

So yeah, for sure it's something, a tool, that I have used in a positive way I think.

Q. The down-the-line backhand was working perfectly this week. Did you feel today you should have gone more down the line with the backhand, been more aggressive with that shot?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, maybe. I mean, I think in the end I was playing in the end too much to Hubie's backhand, which is very strong side for him. He can play that flat backhand both cross-court and very aggressive with down the line, counterattack with the backhand.

Sometimes points in the third set were decided by him doing a good counterattack down the line with the backhand, not myself doing it.

My backhand I think has improved. When I went home from Gstaad this year, I did some small adjustments to the

technical part of my backhand because I was not happy with the way I was hitting the ball towards the end of the clay season. There was too much topspin. The goal has been to flatten it out a little bit more. I think I've been able to do it well this week. It's not something that comes natural to me because I'm typically playing with a lot of topspin from both sides.

I'm happy I've been able to play some matches where I took the ball a little bit earlier and flattened it out a little bit more and got some winners with my backhand.

I'm happy with the progress. I wish I could have done even better this match today. All in all with this week with the matches, I think I've improved it.

Q. A bit more of a general question. You said in the past that one of your dreams of your career would be to bring a tournament to Norway. This year quite a few cities have managed to get into the calendar because of the cancellation of the Chinese swing. Was there any possibility of getting into that opening?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I guess there was. In the end it's going to take a big financial cost. It's not very typical for Norway to go that big into a sport event that we have not done before, I would say.

Tennis is not a very big sport in Norway when it comes to the history of our sport. You see Sweden, who has had great players before, it's maybe more natural for them because they had tournaments for 50, 60, 70 years already.

It shows if Sweden can do it, you'd think that Norway can do it as well.

I think we need a little push by either some sponsors or some wealthy organization or person who really wants to do it. I think it can be done. You see it with other tournaments, that sometimes it's a mix of good loyal sponsors or it's one super wealthy guy on top who loves tennis and wants to do a tournament. There can be many scenarios.

Norway, we have wealthy people because of our oil luckily. I should maybe call them and make them realize that tennis is a good sport to watch I guess (smiling).

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...quand tout est dit, nous avons terminé.