

Omnium Banque Nationale

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Alexei Popyrin

Press Conference



A. POPYRIN/A. Rublev

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: First of all, congratulations, Alexei. You came to this tournament as World No. 62, and you beat five top-20 players in a row, three top-10s to get your first Masters 1000 title. How does it feel now?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah, it feels unbelievable. I kept saying all week the hard work that I've put in over these last few years feels like it's paid off somewhat this week.

I played a really, really high level of tennis, which I believed that I could play my whole life, but to put it into five matches in a row against -- I mean, six matches in a row against really high quality opponents is something else.

I'm just really proud of myself and my team.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You were playing your first Masters 1000 final. You were facing a guy who was playing pretty well, No. 6 in the world this morning. How did you feel right off the bat?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah, I felt pretty calm, to be honest, for me. What I work for is to play in matches like this, and there's no point in going out there nervous or scared of the occasion when you've worked your whole life to play matches like this.

For me I really enjoy playing big matches. I really enjoy playing finals and semifinals and big tournaments in front of a big crowd on a big court. For me that's where I feel like I play my best tennis.

I came out there. I wanted to put a statement in the first game, and I think I did that, which I think rattled him a little bit, which was part of the game plan. I just continued from there.

Q. Everything you touched tonight turned to gold. Was it one of your best matches in your career? Quite

impressive.

ALEXEI POPYRIN: I would say so. I would say it's one of the best matches I've played in my life. I think it's not a level that I haven't seen myself produce in practice or in an occasional match here and there, but considering the occasion, considering what we were playing for, I think with the level that I played, it probably is the best match that I've played in my life.

For me I'm not kind of most proud about how I played in this final. It's more how I played throughout the whole week, the level that I produced the whole week to play these top guys. To beat them with the level of tennis that I showed was really a testament to everything.

Q. Will your girlfriend ever forgive you?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah (laughing). I didn't really mean it in a way that I don't want her to travel. I kind of meant it in a way that I hope she will come. It's her decision.

So I didn't mean it in a way that (laughing) -- I kind of meant it like she wants me to win so much that hopefully she doesn't think that her not being there is a charm.

For me I told her when I got off the court -- I called her straight away, and I said, like, for me -- she knows it already. She knows that I wouldn't be here without her.

She's been through the dips and the bottom of the lows of the lows with me. She's seen me having my worst year in my career, and she was there for me. She really helped me come out of it. She knows that I wouldn't be here without her.

Q. Can you explain, yesterday you were talking about private jet? What is this exactly? Can you describe? Can you explain this?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah. So basically what I was told on the quarterfinals by my coach that if you make finals, the tournament provides a private jet to Cincinnati. Just before the semifinals we were, like, Let's go out and get that private jet.

I've never been on a private jet before in my life, so it will

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

be a first for me tomorrow morning. Yeah, I'm honestly really scared of planes. I'm scared of flying. So we'll see how I go on such a small plane, but yeah.

Q. (Off microphone.)

ALEXEI POPYRIN: I play Wednesday. I should play Wednesday. Yeah, I think. I've been told I play Wednesday.

Q. I wanted to ask you, you mentioned hard work, and you talked about that a little bit this time. How has your work and your preparation changed over the years, let's say, compared to when you were younger?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: I think there's a lot of things behind the scenes that I'm not going to go too much into detail in. There's been some changes that I've made from when I was first coming out as a young player. Just the way I'm working. Just the way I'm kind of looking at how to work and stuff.

For me let's just say at the early start of my career it was to kind of not get injured and just play and just not get injured. Now it's kind of on building a body, building an athlete that we've been doing for two years now.

I felt it out there. Especially the last two matches for me -- well, the last three matches the last two days, you know, coming off two tough matches yesterday and to come out and feel the way I did on the court, it just shows that all the work that we're putting in we're building an athlete.

I don't think we're done yet. My fitness coach is telling me I've got a lot of work to do still. I'm not looking forward to it, but I'm going to do it. That's for sure.

Q. You had an amazing junior career. You were ranked pretty high. Now you're 25, winning that big tournament. So I was wondering, did you expect back then that it would take that long to achieve that level of success? Can you go back to where you were and what you had to go through in the last maybe five, six years?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Well, when I was a junior, you know, you come off winning French Open, No. 2 in the world juniors, you kind of think, okay, you're bound to succeed. You're bound to go to the top quickly.

I saw Canadians do it; Shapovalov, Felix do it. I saw a lot of players that I kind of grew up in juniors who kind of took the next step really quickly.

For me it didn't really come that way. I was a little bit later

than all of them. Even finished my junior career a little bit later than all of them.

When you do win that slam in juniors, you kind of think, okay, now the next step is going to be easy, but it's far from that. To break the top 500 is really hard. To break the top 250 is really hard. To break the top 100 is another level. Then to stay in the top 100 is even harder than that. Then to break the top 50 is even harder than that.

It's like it's so many steps that you kind of don't look at as a junior that you have to kind of proceed. Then once I did do that in 2021... I think that's what you are referring to... I won my first ATP title. I broke the top 60.

I was only 21 years old, and I thought, okay, there's no chance I'm going to kind of drop out of the rankings and I'm just going to continue building from there, but the next year I kind of lost all my points basically. Won three matches on tour. Dropped outside the top 120. Finished 2022 outside the top 120. I had to get a wild card into Australian Open.

Yeah, from then it was kind of like just building blocks step-by-step, getting back to where we wanted to get to. That was last year, which was a really big year for me. You know, winning the clay court title in Umag and then playing some good Masters tournaments here and there and solidifying my spot back inside the top 50.

Then this year honestly it's been kind of up and down for me up until this week obviously. It's been really, like, up and down. I started the year at 38 I think in the world. This week I was 62.

I didn't really defend all my points. There was a risk of me kind of falling outside again because I had big points to defend next week in Cincinnati. I made quarterfinals last year.

So all of these thoughts are in your head all the time, and you have to find a way to kind of block it out all the time. That's what I did really well this week.

Q. You're the first Australian to win a Masters since Lleyton Hewitt in 2003. What does that mean to you?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: It means a lot. It's an unbelievable feeling. Straight after the match point I kind of couldn't believe what just happened.

When I saw Lleyton, he was actually with me at the Olympics last week, and he helped me so much in the Olympics and has helped me so much throughout my career.

He gave me some good advice after my match against Zverev at the Olympics. He said, You took one of the best players in the world, one of the more informed players in the world, to kind of play some unbelievable tennis to beat you. I was a break up in that match, so serving for the set and kind of choked it.

He kind of flipped the switch on it and kind of told me a positive overlook on that match and then gave me the confidence coming into this week. Yeah, a lot of it is to him. Yeah, it's a great feeling.

Q. Would you say it's your best week?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: By far, yeah, I would say so. It's a Masters title. I've only won 250 events up until this point. So for me that's the biggest week.

Like I said, considering the level of opponents that I had to play this week and beat, it definitely is the biggest moment of my career.

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