

Rolex Paris Masters

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Paris, France

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/M. Cressy

7-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Well done. How happy are you with your first match here in Paris?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I am happy with the way I played. When chances were presented, I was able to use them, even though I did have some missed breakpoints.

But it was very challenging first match with a guy who serves extremely well and strong and fast. First and second serve, he risks a lot with the second serve, and actually, he doesn't seem like he's risking too much, because he hasn't made too many double faults.

Although in the first-set tiebreak in some moments when I needed a point in the second set when I broke his serve, he did make a crucial double fault to put me in a better position to break his serve or to win a tiebreak. But he plays kind of low percentage tennis from that point of view. But, you know, it works for him.

He's comfortable coming to the net. It's nice to see. I think he's the only guy that really comes to the net after every first and second serve. I think it's good for tennis to see that, you know, particularly in these modern times when most of the players are playing from back of the court. He's very athletic guy.

So, you know, difficult to play him definitely in these kind of conditions where balls are, I mean, flying through the court and it's quicker than it was last year. So tough to break.

But, you know, I didn't make too many unforced errors. I'm very pleased with the way I served, with the way I was holding my service games. Just the way I felt, the way I played, it was all positive.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. When you play a tiebreaker against a big server like Maxime, do you like this, this exercise? What do you

put in your mind? Do you change something in your game? What do you care about the most?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, first, I think it's most important is to take care of mostly about yourself and what you need to do. I mean, it's not a guarantee that you're going to win your service points in the tiebreak, and that you should only focus on how to return his serve. It's kind of both.

You know, I felt like, you know, I had my chances throughout the first set, so coming into tiebreak I liked my chances. I knew that there is going to be some looks where I'm going to read his first serve, I'm going to get some second-serve opportunities to return.

He makes it difficult, because not only that you have to return his big first and second serve in the play, it's not enough. You've got to put it in the right position, I mean, under his feet and try to be in a position to win a point.

Because he has won a lot of points where, you know, I would return pretty solid return back, but he's, you know, he was picking up those volleys easily.

When someone is serving so big second serve, you know that maybe in the tiebreak he's going to start to think about it, because one thing is to serve when you're playing normal service game, 15-All, maybe 30-15, maybe 40-15, you're going to go for it, you're not going to feel as much pressure. But if it's 1-All or 2-1 in the tiebreak, you know that every point counts, particularly in these kind of quicker conditions and in this kind of a match.

That's what happened. I think it was 1-Love, he made a double fault. You know, I was then focusing to hold my serve, which I did well. 4-1, you know, was a lot of pressure on him. So I made a return and made a passing shot. You know, things happen quickly in the tiebreaker.

So it's really a little bit of both but I think more importantly is to focus on your serve and what you need to do in order to put yourself in a position to make a mini break.

Q. I know it's rough for you not being in contention for year-end No. 1, but regarding Alcaraz trying to make it

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for the first time, can you share what it meant for you the first time you claimed the No. 1 and what kind of pressure or challenge it is at the start of the career and why it's meaning so much?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I heard you saying "trying to make it." He made it already, didn't he?

Q. Not year-end.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Year-end, yesterday?

THE MODERATOR: No, no. Yesterday it was because he reached No. 1.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Okay, okay. I thought it was -- my mistake.

Well, I mean, he has had an incredible year. I have said it before. I mean, I don't mind repeating it. He deserves to be in that position, you know, because of the results he had. I mean, the results are the biggest kind of measurement for the rankings that you can have.

So, you know, he won a slam. He was consistently playing well. Won two, I think, Masters events. He's where he is. Even though he's only 19, he plays with a lot of, I think, maturity. We know he plays with a lot of energy.

But he has a great coach, someone that has been in his shoes, former No. 1, Ferrero. I think it's a perfect combination of two of them. Ferrero knows exactly what he's going through, how he can help him mentally, not only game-wise, to handle all of the pressures of being No. 1 and all of a sudden everybody wants to dethrone you.

There is a lot of things he will experience more. It's just a start for him. But, you know, he's hungry for success. He has said it. You can see that the way he plays. Right now he's going to be in a position where he has to protect, you know, points or protect this position, which is different, much, much different. When you are the chaser, kind of less pressure. But when you're being chased, everyone wants to be where you are, it changes mentally, you know.

So we will see how he's going to handle that. But he's where he is absolutely deserved.

Q. The first time for you when you had...

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: First time for me when I was the No. 1 was in 2011 and after I won Wimbledon. My childhood dreams, both childhood dreams came true in two days: Winning Wimbledon and being No. 1 in the world, and beating Nadal in finals. I mean, that was just the perfect

kind of movie script scenario.

Yeah, the first time is always extra special. You know, going back to Serbia, celebrating with, you know, tens of thousands of people in the street. It was just once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Q. Nadal and Medvedev just became father. What did fatherhood change for you, your career, the travels, everything?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, it changed me a lot as a person. I mean, my profession has not changed. I mean, I did continue to do what I did, and thanks to my wife who, you know, was allowing me to be able to continue playing tennis at this level and taking care of our first child and then the second child, as well.

You know, it's so important to have a partner that is, you know, going to be supportive. And she was sacrificing a lot for me to be able to play, to play tennis and compete.

I had one of the best seasons actually after I became a father in 2014. End of 2014 I became a father, 2015 I had one of the best years. It did give me a huge energy boost and motivation.

But things change, for sure. I mean, it's not only anymore about you. And even though of course when you're on the tour you have your team and everything is done in such a way for you to prosper, to feel good, to be able to win a match or win a tournament, then, you know, back home it's different. You know, everything is about the child and making sure also that the mother is feeling good, taking over the responsibilities.

Of course, it's different for everybody. You know, I can't speak that it's in general like this. Everybody has a different way of seeing the parenthood and how it affects them. You know, for me of course it's the biggest blessing that you can have in your life.

Now my children are 8 and 5, and you go through phases in your experience and you experience different things with them.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

Q. Talk about Stefan, your son. He's playing a lot of tennis. He's watching your matches. He's asking to play with you. For you, is it a new source of motivation in a way?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes, of course. I said that for me it's the greatest source of motivation to see him when he

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watches me in a tournament or when he asks me to play, it's a very special feeling that I have never had in my life.

So it's also interesting to feel or to hear what he says. When he's watching a match, it's very special. But I don't put him under pressure. I don't put expectations on him. For me it's important for him to see tennis as a game, a sport that can help him develop physically, mentally, et cetera.

But it's too early to talk about his career and anything else. It's too early. So please don't ask questions about his career. He's only 8 years old. So it's too early.

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