

Rolex Paris Masters

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Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We will start with a couple of questions in English and then couple in French and then we finish in Serbian. We go straight into questions. Anybody in English?

Q. I assume you know that Holger Rune has teamed up with Boris Becker. I would like to ask you, since you and Boris had three successful years together, what do you think about them teaming up, and how do you think that Boris can help Holger moving forward?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I think it's a very good decision from Holger to invite Boris to join his team. Boris is legend of our sport, someone that, you know, understands the game so well from a player's perspective, coaching perspective.

He's been around the game for so many years. He's seen and played against different players in different generations.

Incredibly intelligent, smart man, very confident, obviously composed. You know, he was famous for his mental strength and ability to come up with his best game when he was facing the biggest pressure.

So I think for Holger, it's a great move because, you know, Holger is a young player who already has established himself in the top 10 of the world, but obviously it's one thing to reach the top 10 and to break into top 10, and it's something else to get to a different level and start winning slams and, you know, getting to the top spots of the world.

So he's learning about it. It's normal that he's experiencing some kind of oscillations and ups and downs with his results. But, you know, I have known Holger for quite a few years. We trained when he was younger than he is now in Monte-Carlo, and I really like his game. I think he's got huge potential, potential to be a Grand Slam winner, no doubt. So I'm sure that Boris will be able to help improve his game overall.

I saw they are playing chess. That was the first thing that Boris introduced to our team, as well, playing chess. I think it's great, you know, for focus and I think just mental

clarity and strategy. Boris is a dear friend, someone who has been through a lot in the last several years of his life. I'm really glad to see him back on the tour as a coach.

It's probably not going to be that nice and comfortable for me seeing him, if I face Holger, seeing him in the opposite box, because that hasn't happened yet. If it does, obviously that's not a great feeling. But at the same time, I have maintained a friendly relation with Boris and he knows I really love him a lot and his family. I'm really glad that they came together.

Q. I would like to know what was the biggest lesson you have learned this year as a tennis player and as a father and husband as well?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Thank you for your question. Hope to be back in Brazil very soon. I miss playing there.

It's a good question. I mean, I'll try to answer first from a tennis point of view. I obviously had a fantastic year so far, winning three out of four slams and playing another finals in Wimbledon. At the beginning of the year I was saying that Grand Slams are the priorities. They still remain the priorities also for the next season and the tournaments where I want to do my best.

So I couldn't ask for a better season, to be honest. One match away from winning all four slams is something I would sign right away at the beginning of the season if someone told me that would be the case.

So, you know, I have always learned something new about myself I think after every tournament. I try to correct things that I don't like, whether it's with my game, whether it's with whatever, my attitude, whether it's with approach, whatever it is. I try to be always the better version of myself the next week comparing to the week before.

Overall, you know, if I have to see things from a general perspective what I learned as a player is that in a way the lesson that I have already learned, but it's good to always go through it again, is that consistency is the key, sticking to the routines, and things that make you a better player and improving. Improvement is a constant process. So

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there is no stagnation and relying on what has served you well before the year before or the week before is going to serve you this week. At least in my mentality and approach, that's not the case.

You know, I always look for ways to be better than I was, especially the year before. Because you have young players and new generations. They are hungry, dynamic, they're energetic, they want to win the biggest tournaments in the world, they want to beat you on the big stage. I know they are doing everything they can to improve and to figure out the way how to win against you.

So, you know, I have to do the same or even more. So I learned again that that's going to give you the results in the end of the day.

And personally, as a father, I have learned that spending more time with children really, you know, grants you with incredible satisfaction and beautiful emotions and things that you carry for a long time that define fatherhood and parenthood in a way. You know, just spending as much as possible quality time with my children.

And because I have been, I would say, modeling my schedule, so to say, this year to my likings where I want to play, and I haven't played many tournaments at all, I've got to spend more time with my family, and that was a beautiful thing. You know, because the rewards that you get in the relationship is something that is bigger than anything.

Q. It's a question about the balls. Stan Wawrinka a few days ago, other players during all the season, complaining about the constantly change about the nature of the balls. What are your opinion about that?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes. I actually just had the conversation with Andrea Gaudenzi, president of ATP, and Massimo, the CEO. Because I haven't been on the tour for quite some time, so I haven't had a chance to talk to them. And of course I have seen the comments that more and more players were making about the balls that were used on different tournaments. Actually, Korda, the player that I practiced with today, told me that this is fifth tournament now in a row that he's been playing with different balls.

Yeah, this inconsistency is an issue, and that's what most of the players, and also of course including myself, we complain about. You know, I think there needs to be a bit more consistency with the balls so that we avoid any kind of issues with wrists and elbows and shoulders.

The quality of the balls, you know, this is something that again, it's very relative to the player. Different players play different styles. They like different balls, depending on the

surface, et cetera.

But I think that, you know, there is actually quite an understanding from Andrea and Massimo about the players' comments and the issues that players have been communicating basically through media, as well. As I understood, there is going to be some board meetings happening soon where they will discuss the different options and things they could do.

But I think overall, it's just, it would be nice for players that there is a consistency. So, for example, if you have a clay court swing prior to Roland Garros, that you play with the same ball. As well as other surfaces and other swings.

Hopefully that's going to be the case. There's obviously a lot of factors that are going to be in play in order to make this change. It's not easy because you have to think about the tournaments and the brands, you know, manufacturing facilities that are owned by the brands or some use as a third party.

So there is a lot of different elements in play that need to be discussed commercially but also functionally for us. But for the players obviously we are not thinking too much about commercial aspect as much as the functional and what is important for us in order to improve or prevent any kind of issues with injuries.

Q. Each time the end of the season comes at the end of the season when the slams are over and you won most of them, we have the same question: What is Novak chasing now? What is he running after? Why do you compete with all the records you have? So for this end of swing, Paris and Turin, what are you running after?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, you know, I have said this before. Of course my greatest motivation is still love for the game. I really like competing. So as simple as that.

Then, you know, I always have goals, you know, and to win another slam, to be No. 1 again, to finish the year as No. 1.

Those are let's say the big goals. Of course next year is Olympic Games. I really want to do well in Olympic Games, represent my country. Davis Cup is something that still gives me a lot of inspiration.

Of course any tournament where I play, I want to win, no doubt. But the big goals are the ones that I mentioned. So I think it's important to have clarity, you know, to have goals and ambitions and move towards them.

I have, let's say, luxury right now to choose which



tournaments I participate on, to set my schedule in such a way where I can peak at the right tournaments where I set my highest goals.

That's, you know, professionally, if you want an answer to you. And I'm of course very grateful to be in a position where I am right now in the moment in history of our sport and of my own career. I still feel young in my own body. It's serving me well. I won three out of four slams.

You know, there is obviously differences with different tennis players in the past that, you know, some of them think that it's best to leave tennis when you're at the top. Some of them think when you figure out you can't win the biggest tournaments anymore and that you're losing to the young guys, then you leave it. I'm more in the second group.

As long as I'm, you know, main contender for the Grand Slams and still, you know, win the biggest tournaments in sport, I will not leave. I mean, unless mentally something happens and I really have no motivation anymore, but that's not the case for now.

Sorry about that, I don't know if that satisfies you or not, but... (Laughter.)

THE MODERATOR: Questions in French.

Q. You have a record in Grand Slams but also in Masters 1000s and numbers of titles you hold. A lot of people think that you are the GOAT, the greatest player of all time. Some journalists think that you are the greatest player, some journalists, some players. But you say it's not up to you. And Rafael Nadal said there is no need to talk about it; you are the greatest. It's your greatest rival who said it. Now that it has been said out loud by him, don't you think that you are?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, I'm not going to say I am the greatest player of all times. It's not up to me to say things like that. I leave it up to others. Obviously I'm very proud that my greatest rival could say such things, but I leave this discussion to other people.

I'm honored to be a tennis player who's writing my own name in the history of tennis, and I'm glad to be at the top right now. That's the most important thing for me. Then we can discuss at length about the whole history of tennis, but once my career is over we can do it. Right now I guess this is very interesting for you, for everyone, all of you who follow tennis.

But as far as I'm concerned, that's not a priority for me. I need to maintain, to focus myself on what is important for

me right now.

Q. You're playing golf, basketball. How were your holidays? Is it hard to go back to tennis playing?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It was wonderful to be with my family, especially with my wife, my children. I did try to use my free time to play golf, to follow other sports, as well. I'm a big fan of basketball. So I followed all the Belgrade club matches. As far as golf is concerned, I'm not at the same level as tennis, definitely (smiling).

But I made most of my free time, I have to say. I made sure to have some quality time with my family. Over the last three weeks I have practiced a lot, I have done a lot of physical preparation to make sure that I was ready for the end of the season.

But the work that we have done over the last month was aiming at making me more precise, more accurate, because I knew that I didn't have so much time afterwards for the end of the season. So I'm quite satisfied with all these weeks of free time that I spent.

But tennis, I'm missing tennis, you know. I'm missing competitions, as well. Especially here in Paris. I can feel the support. And I think that I can deliver here.

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