

US OPEN

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John Isner

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: John, welcome. Rather than me ask an obvious question, I'll open the questions to the room.

JOHN ISNER: Okay.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. I want to ask you about obviously for a long stretch, you carried that burden for American tennis. Would you talk about what that responsibility was like, what you liked about it, what you didn't like about it.

JOHN ISNER: I never really honestly felt like it was a burden. I do know the players before me are all Hall of Famers. Obviously you talk about Andy Roddick, he's in the Hall of Fame. The guys before him, I don't need to mention their names.

I never felt like it was a burden to be the No. 1 American. Maybe because I wasn't, like, in juniors and through college real spoken about. I think in a sense I sort of came on tour with not much pressure on myself. Of course, there weren't many expectations for me. That helped me out a lot.

Of course, I did take pride in being the best I could be. I always did want to be the No. 1 American. I'd be lying if I told you I didn't. I never felt like there was this huge, enormous burden on me to try to get there.

When I was the top American, to be quite honest with you, American men's tennis wasn't what it was in the '90s -- or early 2000s, excuse me.

Again, being the top American, I don't know how many years it was, just maintaining my ranking for a very long time, is something I'm very proud of and I took great pride in the preparation it took day in, day out, year after year after year. I really truly enjoyed that.

Q. Did you get more out of it than you thought you would?

JOHN ISNER: Oh, yeah, for sure. I think I've

overachieved. I never imagined myself having this much success for this long.

Mentioned in one of my statements, of course there's so many matches I wish I could have back, but I prepared in my mind as best as I possibly could for 17 years.

I don't have many regrets, that's for sure.

Q. You mentioned Andy Roddick. What to you is Andy Roddick's legacy on this 20th anniversary of him winning the US Open?

JOHN ISNER: I think just how hard he worked. I think he would admit, obviously he was talented, but I don't think he was the most talented guy, by any means, but he was an absolutely bulldog on the court, of course, but off the court in how he trained, how he took care of himself. One of the hardest workers I think this sport has ever seen.

When I'm in college or high school, seeing him win the US Open, then come on tour with him, see how hard he worked, it definitely showed me that I had a long way to go just to try to match him because he was at the top of the top 10 forever, top 5 for a long time, too. He just worked his ass off each and every day.

Just watching that for me was very inspiring. If I wanted to be a top professional, I knew I had to at least try to do what he does.

Q. Frances got asked the question earlier. As soon as he heard, Andy Roddick 20 years ago, he rolled his head that he knew what was coming, that the Americans haven't won since then. Did you ever sense that it took its toll on the guys of your generation having to answer that question so many times? We've seen a lot of players coming back, women from childbirth, Kevin Anderson playing. Are you sure?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I'm certain (smiling). My tweet has like five million views or something like that. I'm done.

No, I think on the women's side, I think it's very cool and inspirational to see some of these women come back after becoming mothers. I think that's very unique.



On the men's side, it doesn't happen as much. It did happen with Kevin. It won't happen with me, yeah.

Q. The question about hearing the 20 years American man not winning a Grand Slam, do you feel like it took its toll hearing about that?

JOHN ISNER: Maybe a little bit. It has been a long time. It's the longest stretch this country's ever had, for sure.

We'll see. I think American men's tennis is in a very good spot right now. I mean, who knows. Like, that could keep going because the No. 1 player is pretty good and very young.

We have a lot of players that can definitely challenge for that Grand Slam. I mean, heck, Frances was a set away from being in the finals last year, so... Just need things to fall into place for you throughout the course of two weeks. It's definitely possible. But we're in a good spot right now, I think.

Q. 16 years ago when you stood on that court in Athens and led your team to the NCAA championship with your brother drunk and screaming from the stands, do you look back now and does that seem a lifetime ago? Can you give us three absolute highlights, and I assume one involves Nicolas Mahut.

JOHN ISNER: No, it actually doesn't seem like that long ago, which is crazy. The Wimbledon match doesn't seem like 13 years ago either.

I have such fond memories of my time in Athens. One of my tennis highlights I think was winning the national championship in 2007. It was in our home stadium. We had like 6,000 fans for a college tennis match, which is pretty unique. I played Kevin Anderson on Court 1, which is cool, because we've had similar careers in the pro ranks.

As you mentioned, the match in 2010, there's no doubt about that. It was an insane match to be a part of.

I think when I actually beat Andy Roddick here in 2009 -- I'm just answering that question about Andy -- in the third round in five sets on Arthur Ashe, that was for me a pivotal moment in my career. He was top 5 in the world I think. Just to be able to beat him in front of that atmosphere on Arthur Ashe was so cool. That's the guy who I looked up to, not literally of course, but...

To be able to do that was fun. It was a situation where no pressure was on me and I was able to capitalize on that.

I've had a lot of great moments. A lot of moments not so

great. Some awesome moments in Davis Cup. I beat Roger Federer in Switzerland one time. That was cool. The court was really bad, bad bounces were everywhere. He didn't like that. I loved it. The worse the court, the better for me (smiling).

It's not so much individual matches that stick out. It's just the memories I have with my friends on tour. Then the last three, four, five years, my family on tour. Very special.

Q. What will you miss most?

JOHN ISNER: I'm definitely going to miss mostly the competition on the match court. I don't think I'm going to miss the practice 'cause lately it's been tough. I haven't been able to train like I'm used to, nor should I. It's just when to ramp up my training, when to taper back. If I train too hard, my body lately has been sort of breaking down on me.

It's just been tough. I haven't been able to put in the exact same work that I've been doing for my whole career because my body hasn't been quite allowing me to. That's what's been difficult. I think that's why my results have suffered this year. I haven't been fully healthy this year. Hopefully I am this week.

Again, I mentioned earlier, I took great pride in preparing. It's not easy to get a body like mine ready to play for 17 consecutive years. It's not easy at all. That was the part I really enjoyed all throughout my career, but lately it's becoming tougher.

Certainly the atmosphere on some of the matches I played I'm going to miss, there's no doubt.

Q. A lot of players when they retire have spoken about a void that they feel after tennis. You spend a lot of years playing this sport, having the moments. In your 30s, it's over. Are you worried at all?

JOHN ISNER: I wouldn't say I'm worried, but I'm not going to sit here and act like it's going to be easy. I think some players put on a brave face and say they can't wait for retirement.

It's not really that. I wanted to play this sport as long as I possibly could. Inevitably it was going to end. There's probably going to be a lot of tough times 'cause for the last 17 years, just professionally, I would wake up every morning, How do I get better? If it's on the practice court, if it's just in the gym, or if it's just resting that day. It's just about trying to keep myself going year over year over year. I'm not going to have that anymore. There's definitely going to be that void.

Fortunately for me, the most important thing is that I've got an amazing life at home. I'm going to lean on my wife and kids as much as I possibly can to fill that void.

I'm going to need to stay busy, because that's how I'm wired. I can't just be home all the time. Of course, I'm going to be the best dad I can possibly be. I'm going to have to channel my energy elsewhere and attack some different avenues professionally to keep me going.

Q. Like what?

JOHN ISNER: We'll see. I don't know how much it's going to be in tennis. I can see myself doing some TV. How much, I don't know. I think I could be okay at it. Maybe not. But I'd like to certainly give it my best shot. See what I want to do in the business world.

Where I live right now in Dallas, Texas, is a great place to be. I have a lot of great friends and mentors there that can help me out in that regard.

The key is going to be to stay busy 'cause that's what's going to keep me mentally there, it's going to allow me to be the best father and husband I can possibly be.

I think it will be a challenge. I don't pretend it's going to be easy, but I am looking forward to it.

Q. You're still very much competitive and a threat to anyone. When did you know you made this decision you were set in stone? Now you have a fall to enjoy your Georgia Bulldogs going for a third straight national title, to be on the sidelines to watch that finally.

JOHN ISNER: I will say it wasn't at the beginning of this year. I knew it could be possible, but I did want to play as long as I could. If my results were better this year, I probably wouldn't be speaking to you right now. That just hasn't been the case.

This year has been tough health-wise. I had a foot thing that just bothered me for a long time. I wasn't able to train really at all but I was still playing without much practice. It just wasn't much fun. It just became very laborious for me just trying to get myself healthy and not really being able to do it. Competing not quite at 100% for a little bit too long this year. Very taxing mentally on me.

Then you take a few losses here and there, and it just becomes tough, a little bit discouraging. But I did know if I was going to retire this year, it was going to be at this tournament, which would be amazing.

I would say I really knew about, I don't know, maybe around the French Open time, maybe after the French Open, that this was probably going to be it. I'm happy with my decision. There's certainly no regrets right now.

Q. Your career happens to have overlapped with the invention and advent of social media. In that time fans have gone from friendly to becoming less friendly. What advice would you give to the young guys starting out now when it comes to social media?

JOHN ISNER: Well, yeah, probably just ignore the hate as much as you can. Us professional tennis players, we get it. In an individual sport, we get it after every single match we play. It's really kind of crazy the stuff people can say.

You just really have to feel sorry for them. Most of the time it's people that have lost money on you. I kind of chuckle at it. If I choked and they lost money on me, it kind of makes me smile a little bit.

That's social media. Obviously we know it does amazing things for the world, but there's a flip side to it, as well. I think if people just can get face to face with different points of view, most people are civil.

Just try not to respond to that hate and just ignore it as best as possible. It's not easy, there's no doubt about it. That's just how it is nowadays. When you see messages people write, you just try to delete 'em as quick as you can and forget about it. It's only short-term. It stinks that people have to be that way, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: John, congratulations on a great career.

JOHN ISNER: Thank you very much.

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