

US OPEN

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New York, New York, USA

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back. Let's go right to the questions.

Q. We see you on the court, we don't always know what's going on in your head.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Me, too (smiling).

Q. As you chase these big numbers, it will be 24 here now that you're chasing, what is it like, could you give us a glimpse inside your head when you're playing in the pressure matches?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I get nervous as anybody else really. People think that I don't have any stress or tension. Actually in contrary, I have quite a lot of that. I have to deal with it, manage it. Everyone has their own way of managing the emotions and trying to be in optimal balance emotionally, mentally, and physically in order to perform their best.

I've played great the entire week prior to the finals. Haven't dropped a set in Cincinnati. Then played night sessions all of the matches, then I played on a very hot day, just experienced physical difficulties.

Carlos was playing very well. He's always pushing me to the limit. I think I do to him pretty much the same thing. That's why we produced memorable final. It was one of the best, most exciting, and most difficult finals I was ever part of in best-of-three, no doubt, throughout my career.

That's why I fell on the ground after I won the match because it felt like winning a Grand Slam, to be honest. The amount of exchanges and rallies. It was physically so demanding and grueling that I felt very exhausted for the next few days.

Those are kind of the moments in matches that I still push myself on a daily basis for day in and day out, practice, sacrifice, commitment. At 36, still have the drive.

I love competition. I think the more you find yourself in those particular circumstances where you're experiencing



adversity on the court, where things are not maybe moving the right way for you in terms of the performance of that day, in terms of tennis, or mentally you're not feeling your best, that's normally the best possible opportunity for you to grow mentally from that, to learn something. Normally in the face of adversity is where you learn the most.

So that's kind of my mentality in these kind of matches, really trying to not accept defeat as an option, and really give it all, really give it all.

It's kind of a cat-and-mouse play really on the court. There's a lot of things that are happening. You're trying to outplay or outsmart your opponent tactically, but then you have to fight with your own demons as well, the self-doubt, tension, all the things that are happening in the midst of such battle.

Q. When you think about this place, the highs and the lows that you've had here, what are the first things that come to mind?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: The first feeling that I have is excitement to come back because it is the biggest arena we have in our sport, the biggest stadium, and definitely the most fun, electric, exciting atmosphere out there in tennis, playing night session in Arthur Ashe, no doubt.

I'm very excited that I'll be able to play the opening night on Monday. Come back in front of probably the loudest fans in sport, tennis fans in sport.

I'm just very, very looking forward to that. It's been two years when I played last here and lost finals to Medvedev in '21, going for four slams in a year. I haven't performed well that day in terms of tennis. But what I felt from the crowd, that kind of connection and love and support that they gave me throughout entire match and also in the closing ceremony, was something that I carry still in my heart, and I still feel vibes from that night of the finals two years ago.

Yeah, I try to use that for this year's tournament.

Q. A lot of water under the bridge from your last appearance to now. Does the length of time you were away from playing here at the US Open, the inability to play here, does that add anything to what you're going



to be feeling when you get out there?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, Grand Slams are the biggest goals that I have in my career at the moment. I always speak about that, that I aim to peak and perform my best in Grand Slams.

I don't know how many more slams I'll have. I'll still keep going. I don't have an end in my mind at the moment. I also understand that things are different when you're 36, so I have to be more appreciative, a bit more I guess present, treating every Grand Slam as maybe your last one in terms of commitment and performance.

I see this every Grand Slam that I play right now as really a golden opportunity to make more history. Of course, there's a big significance to that.

I wouldn't say adds a bit more, the fact I haven't played here for two years, it's just the feeling is pretty much the same. There's always these expectations, excitement, and ambition to win the title. That's pretty much the same this year.

Q. When you do come back here this week, is there any sort of lingering anger or disappointment that you should have been here last year? You mentioned the last match you played here, a great feeling with the fans. Does that make it more of a bummer to not be here last year?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, there was no anger. It was last year during the Open that I felt it's a pity that I'm not there. I felt sad for not being able to participate.

But this year, I mean, is this year. I don't think about what happened in the last year or last couple of years. Just focusing my attention to this year's tournament.

Q. Do you still live and stay and train in New Jersey when you come to the Open? If so, what benefits do you get out of that? Are you able to see or enjoy New Jersey at all?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, I do. I combine the city with New Jersey. Normally before the tournament starts, I'm in the city. Once the tournament starts, we go into full lockdown mode. My friend has a beautiful estate there with tennis courts. Just me and my family, we stay there. We have a relaxing time. It's great in the off days between the matches, you just kind of recharge, rejuvenate, and you're able to come out and really have more energy.

I just feel like the city is amazing, but after a while it starts being a distraction. When the tournament starts, what you

need is the tranquility, just taking things day by day.

Q. Since Roger won here last in 2008, no male player has won this title back to back. It's been 15 years. What do you think it is specifically about this tournament, even for you specifically, that you haven't been able to do it compared to the other hard court slam?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I actually lost more finals here than I won in my career. My score in the finals of US Open is the worst of all slams I think. There's some very close finals that I lost; some that I won.

But generally I think the consistency of results here has been pretty good. I mean, I've played most of my US Open editions at least quarterfinals or better throughout the last 15 years.

It could be the fact that it's in the end of the season in a way. End of the Grand Slam season. It's the last Grand Slam of the year. It's been eight tough months of tennis for all the players. Maybe that's the reason why you would probably see more surprises in this Grand Slam than maybe some other slams. That's the only thing that really comes to my mind.

Yeah, nothing else.

Q. You've had so many rivals throughout your career, now this one with Alcaraz. When you're in a rivalry like that, how much are you thinking about that player when you're training? Is there anything particular about Alcaraz's game which is having a material impact on what you're working on, how you train?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I wouldn't say specifically. I mean, depends if there is a potential matchup coming closer, then yes, I would be probably thinking a bit more working on certain tactical implementations on the court, practice court, that I could use against him in my favor.

Again, tennis is such sport where, for example, in a tournament like Cincinnati, you play five matches in five days. You can't really be thinking about what happens in three or four days. You're just thinking about the next day, your next opponent.

I think it's also in a way disrespectful to your next opponent if you're already thinking about your finals matchup. Even though I've had tremendous success, maybe you could argue that I could already start thinking about later phases and stages in the tournament, but that kind of mindset never really resonated with me.

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But Carlos is No. 1 in the world. He's definitely one of the best players in the world the last couple years. Sure, there's always an eye that follows him from my team, from any other team. I know that the same goes for me probably. We follow each other.

I'm sure his team watches my matches. My team watches his matches. It's no secret. But seriously working on a practice court on something that is related to Alcaraz, it only happens if I get to play him.

Q. Since coming back to New York City, you've been having a lot of fun. You played tennis yesterday in Times Square. Has the approach for this year's US Open feel different from everything that's happened in the past for you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, I mean, I'm trying to have fun. As I said, staying in the city, the city gives you a lot of energy to some point. I'm really enjoying myself. waterdrop has organized the great event yesterday at the Times Square. It was the first time I played tennis at the Times Square. It was fun with kids from one of the local tennis clubs.

There's so much to do and so much to see. Obviously you have to balance it well with your commitments here on-site, training and preparing and recovering.

I wouldn't say it has changed too much. I'm trying to juggle, I guess, with commitments that I have off the court with sponsors, some PR activities. Most of the attention is obviously focused on what needs to be done so I can prepare well for US Open.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Thank you.

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