

# US OPEN

Tuesday, September 5, 2023

New York, New York, USA

## Novak Djokovic

### Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/T. Fritz

6-1, 6-4, 6-4

**THE MODERATOR:** Straight sets. Two hours and 35 minutes. On Sunday you said you were completely satisfied with your game. Put this afternoon's performance into context for us.

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC:** I think it was a great match again. We both struggled I think physically a lot, especially in the first set, set and a half. Very humid conditions. Just sweating a lot, you know, reaching the towel basically more or less after every point.

Yeah, the first set was 6-1, but I think in terms of the time played, it was almost an hour. Then, you know, in the second set I felt like he started playing better, missing less, hitting his serves, hitting the spots better.

But in the crucial moments I guess I managed to just stay tough and find the right shots, make him play always an extra shot. Make him run. I know that on the move he's not really the most comfortable. I think I have done well, except a few games here and there where I struggled.

But, you know, a very solid performance and I'm really pleased with the way I played.

**THE MODERATOR:** Questions.

**Q. After some of your slam victories in the past, you have thanked your team for kind of putting up with you for a couple of weeks because you can be difficult to be around. Wondered if you could just elaborate...**

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC:** Who is not difficult? (Smiling.)

**Q. But you can get pretty intense behind the scenes.**

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC:** Yeah, I mean, look, I care about this profession and I take it very seriously. I know that a lot of the other players do too. You know, we expect the highest kind of dedication and I guess involvement from our team

members, as our team members and coaching staff expect from us.

The intensity is there. In the heat of the battle, obviously a lot of different things can be done on the court. But, you know, overall we are a team, we are sticking together through good times, bad times, and I'm grateful that I have the team that I have. You know, we have had some tremendous success in the last, especially in the last couple of years. You know, I'm pleased with where I stand.

Yeah, I can be difficult, but who is not, again? I don't know the player playing on the highest level that is, you know, easygoing and, you know, everything is, so to say, flowers and music, you know, (smiling). It has to be challenging for everyone, for the player and for the coaching staff, otherwise there is no growth. I think that's the way to push each other to the limits and really understand how you can develop the game, how you can become better on and off the court.

**Q. You're known for always finding another way to motivate yourself. You were playing an American today, obviously on home soil, you're going to play another one on Friday. Been a long time since you were playing Americans in this place this deep in the tournament.**

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC:** Deep in the tournament, yeah.

**Q. I'm curious about what role that plays in terms of motivation for you.**

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC:** Well, I mean, today it was a great test, you know, to see how it feels being on the court, quarterfinals against a top American. Taylor has been playing some great tennis this tournament, I thought.

But, you know, I was very determined. I knew, I had clarity on what I need to be doing on the court. Of course, you know, in the heat of a moment, you know, sometimes you want to use that energy to lift yourself up, and sometimes you just want to kind of cocoon yourself and really isolate the noise and focus on breathing and focus on the, you know, staying present and focusing on the next point.

So it's really adapting to whatever circumstances have for you and whatever is required in that moment for you.



Sometimes I just like to, you know, not really pay attention on what's going on on the stands. But sometimes I want to respond, and I want to feed off that energy, you know. So that's what was happening today. That was the case.

I think, you know, the crowd got into it I think, yeah, midway third set, you would say, or last maybe four, five games, they really got into it. Taylor actually played great. You know, we pushed each other toe to toe.

So I didn't really want him to win the third set, because, you know, then I guess the crowd would really get into it even more and it would become more difficult task for me to handle, because, you know, it's normal, it's logical to expect that most of the crowd would support the home player.

That's probably going to be the case on Friday, but I'll be ready for it.

**Q. I have heard you say a few times this year that, hey, I'm 36. The body doesn't necessarily react the way it used to or recover the way it used to. Wondering, what about your mind in that way, and is it a similar-type process for you, the mental and emotional recovery as the physical? And how do you take care of those, especially by this time in a long season?**

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC:** I would just say it's different, you know. I said not in a way that recovery is more difficult nowadays than it was 10 years ago. It's just different.

I have to have an approach that is different from what it was 10 years ago. I have to adapt to my, you know, to my life and changes. I'm the father of two children, a lot of things are happening off the court that are obviously part of my life that affects me in one way or another, my mental state, my emotional state. You know, I need to know how to handle all of these things and create a formula that works. So far, so good.

I must say that I have really a lot of people around me, you know, in terms of the medical, you know, fitness, and physiotherapy, kinesiology, you know, aspect to make sure that my body is recovered and is in shape in order to compete at the highest level.

Yeah, as I said, you know, mentally there is probably a lot more that I'm dealing with in my private life than it was the case 10 years ago. But that's the beauty of life, you know. Things are evolving, moving on.

I just feel that there is always, I guess, an extra gear that you have inside of you and you can find when you dig deep to handle, you know, and manage energy levels on and off

the court if you're really devoted to that and if you care about it, if you pay attention to that mental aspect as much as physical, of course.

Because for quite a few years actually mental training was not really talked about much generally in the tennis world. And, you know, mental health is a subject that is quite talked about in the last, I would say, three, four years, which I'm glad. You know, it needs to be out there, it needs to be, you know, addressed in a proper way so that the players have proper understanding of what they are going through and then have help and, you know, guidance, necessary guidance for them to overcome certain obstacles.

Because in the end of the day, we are also people that are also, you know, have to deal with the private issues that everyone has, but then on that high level of individual sport, a lot of things, relationships with your close ones, can affect how you feel on a decisive point, you know.

That's why it's so important to address everything holistically, multidisciplinary, so to say, because then you will just be more prepared. You will have more tools that you can use in a given moment.

**Q. One thing you haven't addressed is how the fun is for you at this stage compared to all these other semifinals you have reached and what your thoughts are on facing perhaps Frances Tiafoe or Shelton.**

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC:** Can you repeat the first question?

**Q. Yeah, the fun. The fun that you're experiencing at this stage, after all these semifinals, compare with all the previous. Then your thoughts on who you're facing in the next round.**

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC:** I mean, I'm trying to enjoy the moments on the court, but there is so much stress and pressure going on that it's hard to have fun, so to say, on the court. It's really about finding a way to navigate through the match and win a tennis match for me, you know.

But off the court, in terms of the actual journey of still being a professional tennis player and going around the world, traveling with my coaching team, you know, we try to keep things light off the court and have fun and enjoy life, because in the end of the day, you have to find that optimal balance. For each one of us it's different. Obviously it's quite individual.

And in terms of my next opponent, again, it's going to be an American player, for sure. I have to be ready for a great

battle. You know, both of the guys that I'm going to face eventually on Friday, Shelton and Tiafoe, have a lot of charisma. They bring a lot of energy on the court. They are very quick, very powerful. I mean, Ben Shelton has been serving some bombs this tournament. When his serve is on, he's very difficult player to play against, especially because he's lefty, as well.

Then you have the Big 'Foe who is one of the favorite guys in the locker room, fun to be around, always smiling, always bringing good vibes, and fantastic player. He's played semis US Open last year here, beat Nadal in quarters and had a great run.

And he thrives. Both actually, both players thrive on the energy of the crowd, of the center court, kind of gets them going, and they play their best. It's going to be fun to watch them tonight. I think it's going to be quite close match the way they are both playing pretty well.

Yeah, I look forward to it. I have couple days off, no match. It actually serves well for my body at this stage of the tournament, and I'll be ready for Friday whoever is across the net.

**Q. You mentioned the crowd getting more into it in the third set. Looked like there was a point where I think he broke you where you kind of lost your concentration and froze. You were tracking the ball and it landed somewhere where you could have had it. Did a fan yell, distract you?**

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC:** Yeah. Yeah, he did (smiling). He was actually in the box where some of my friends were. I don't know who the guy was, but yeah, I was pretty annoyed by him at that point. I was communicating with my friends to have a little chat with him.

**Q. Are you seeing more of that happen where Medvedev is complaining the other night where people are cheering between first and second serves?**

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC:** I mean, look, it happens. Sometimes you react, but most of the time you don't. I speak for myself. Obviously there is whatever percent of the time you don't react. People speak, they move around. You've got to be ready for that, particularly in US Open, especially in the night sessions.

It just, you know, that's part of it. It's part of the sport, and I don't, you know, mostly I don't mind it, but, you know, in those important moments when you're all of a sudden under a lot of stress and you're facing a breakpoint and then all of a sudden everything annoys you and distracts you, so then you react.

But that's, again, heat of the moment, and playing on the highest level. You know, crowd -- I'm actually glad the crowd wants to get into it, because it means that the match is interesting, that they want to be part of it. That they're having fun. At the end of the day, they pay tickets to come and watch you play, so we try to put on a show and perform for them so they go back home, you know, satisfied that they have been here and enjoyed their day.

So sometimes you might have an interaction with the player, you know, like this guy today, I'm sorry for him, but he was really annoying at that point. And that's it. You know, it happens.

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