

US OPEN

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New York, New York, USA

Rohan Bopanna

Matthew Ebden

Press Conference

RAM-SALISBURY/Bopanna-Ebden

2-6, 6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, congratulations on a great tournament. Obviously not the results that you wanted this afternoon, but talk about the tournament in general and today what changed after the first set.

ROHAN BOPANNA: Yeah, it's been, you know, a hard-fought two weeks to get here to the final. I think we started really well into that match, you know, breaking them twice and taking that momentum.

We had a small chance in the second set early, you know, I think maybe we had a breakpoint, a close point where we didn't really break.

I had a feeling the momentum shifted a little bit. I played a loose game in the second set, missed a couple of easy forehands, which kind of giving that confidence and giving them that break. Yeah, I think third set, again, we had a long, long game at 1-2, you know, where we had a few good chances to, you know, to break and we didn't convert.

I think when they had a chance, they came up with the goods and got the better of us, you know, from there.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, tough, basically what Bops said. I think we're on the same page. It's basically a one-point ball game. Yeah, I think we had one breakpoint early in the second, he hit a good serve, first serve wide, just missed it. Half a chance there. Didn't quite get it.

Then, yeah, somehow they sort of snuck out that second. Second we were down the first game at love. We did well, I think Love-40 the first game. We fought really hard to push and pull that, turn that around to get back and get on the front foot and get up 2-1. I think we had a couple of breaks, two or three maybe. I think one of them, at least one or two, one a good chance, the other two, one sort of no chance, one half a chance maybe. Yeah, it's a



one-point ball game basically.

Yeah, not much more to say. It was a one-point ball game, and they got that one point on us and we didn't get the one point on them.

It's a game of inches, sometimes even a game of millimeters, and I feel like that's what it was today. Unfortunately we were on the wrong side of it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Considering what both of you have just said, do you feel that really was the case of them picking up when they really needed to compared to you guys dropping a little bit?

MATTHEW EBDEN: I feel maybe a tiny bit of both. I don't feel like they really raised their game too much. They kept making some balls, making some pressure. Like you said, we had one loose game there maybe in the second, wherever it was.

That's going to happen. Over the course of Grand Slam tennis, it's finals, it's quarters, semis, finals, it's always going to happen. You're always going to have little lapses or little things here or there. It's about how you fight back.

We fought back strongly in the third to save the first game. I think that was really important, and get back on the ascendency and then get 2-1 up, have some chances there to maybe if we get one of those points and a good routine. I think Bops had a volley, couldn't quite finish. They kept going.

Couple really low volleys at them, they made them by this much. One of those hits the net, goes out, makes the volley through them, we're up 3-1, probably we go on to win 6-4 or something.

Yeah, I don't think they overly lifted and then started zoning, let's say. I don't think we overly dropped off. I think it's always a competitive match. They're a quality team; we're a quality team. Like we know all year, it's going to usually come down to one or two points, as most weeks do with the top, top teams.

Yeah, unfortunately we were one point behind.



Q. Rohan, what happened in that seventh game of the third set at Love-15 on Matt's serve? You said the ball brushed. I didn't watch it, so I don't know what happened. Did you straightaway go up? If you can just take us through what happened.

ROHAN BOPANNA: I mean, when Matt hit that forehand crosscourt, the ball hit my elbow. I don't think anybody really saw it. So I claimed it on myself.

That's the person I have been through my career, and I really feel, you know, if something, doesn't matter what the scoreline or what the occasion of the match is, if something was not right, it was not right. You know, straightaway I went and told the referee that the ball had touched. I think she was confused too at what is happening.

Despite I told her that the ball touched me, she still decided to call the score 15-All. Then she asked me, Do you want to forfeit that point?

I said, If I was not forfeiting the point, I wouldn't tell you that the ball touched me.

Sometimes the referees also need to understand.

MATTHEW EBDEN: The only one in the stadium who saw it hit you was me. Because I was right behind you, so I saw it deviate off you slightly.

ROHAN BOPANNA: That's exactly what happened, yeah.

Q. Rohan, considering the words that Rajeev Ram said to you after the match and that sportsmanship moment, the class act that you are, what are your thoughts of those words that Rajeev had for you? Matt, can you talk about the partnership with Rohan and just how you have enjoyed this tournament but the times with him and continue to have more times with him.

ROHAN BOPANNA: No, absolutely. I'm really thankful, you know, to have people around, been around the circuit who appreciate something that when that happens, and I think we are all really good friends off the court of course, and really on the court we go there to compete and win.

Yeah, but this partnership has been really fantastic. We literally started, decided to play together in Paris the last week of the year, and we said, okay, let's give it a shot to see how this year goes. Apart from January, I think the entire season we have been consistently doing well in big events and playing good together. I think we are constantly learning as a team, and, you know, trying to

build on that.

Yeah, you know, I know we have had a tough loss here today, absolutely it would have been amazing to win a Grand Slam title, coming this close, especially because we have been playing fantastic this whole week, you know.

Still, we got a few more tournaments to finish the season. Yeah, go back a few days, get some time off, you know, from the ATP Tour. We still have tournaments there because we have Davis Cup, I have Asian Games, so there is plenty to play, yeah, from the ATP circuit.

Then come back to, get back starting in Shanghai and all the way to, you know, Paris and then maybe Turin as well.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Second part of your question, yeah, the partnership, it's been fun. It's been great. It's been great to play with, you know, last year I played with someone a little bit younger than me, so this year I've played with someone a little bit older than me.

I find obviously he's very experienced and mature, been around especially the doubles tour a long time. We've been able to build and learn off each other, help balance each other out, push each other.

It's been a growing partnership, and it's been great. I think, you know, we talked about our goals at the end of last year when we started or this year when we started, and, I said, Look, no secret, we'd come off winning Wimbledon playing one of the top teams, and I know Bops has been No. 2 in the world or 3 --

ROHAN BOPANNA: 3.

MATTHEW EBDEN: -- and being in the finals of slams. I said, Look, I want to win Grand Slams. I want to get to No. 1. I said, Are you in? He said, I'm in, mate. So we've been building and going for it.

That was the goal this week as it is with every week. We came not too far away at Wimbledon. We were in the semifinals there, we were in the hunt, played a good tournament.

Here too I think we played a good tournament -- I just saw one of my friends out there -- I think we played well enough to win today actually. Yeah, we did play well enough to win. We were one shot or half a shot away from being up a break and probably winning that match.

So it's encouraging times. For our partnership, we're going great. I see everything good in the future. If Bops wants to keep playing, I'm in. There's no reason not to go with the

odds. You know, the odds are in our favor. We're building, we're going really well in the race, we're ticking all those boxes.

Yes, like you said, it's gut-wrenching and probably won't sleep for some nights losing the final. It's the worst thing. But it's also almost the best thing, too, being in Grand Slam finals. It's where you want to be. It's really great. We love it. That's probably the key to his longevity and hopefully mine too, that we keep that balance and that love and the passion for the game.

You know, we keep enjoying our lives at the same time with our families and our careers. Long may it last.

Q. Knowing how hard it is to win any Grand Slam and in doubles, you change partners a lot. Teams don't stay together maybe. How do you view their accomplishment today to win three US Opens in a row?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Their accomplishment? Yeah, I think it's impressive, I think especially given their season so far. I think it's no secret that they've really struggled this year. I don't think they've won more than back-to-back matches or two or three matches in a row, maybe only a few times. They have been really struggling, actually, taking a lot of losses for six, seven, eight months.

It's the nature of the season. If you stick together, you keep playing well, keep pushing, you build those partnerships, you give yourself a chance, there's still, like Bops said, many tournaments -- this one, still a Grand Slam, there is still two Masters Series to play, still ATP 500s, and potentially Turin, as well, for those who get in. There is still thousands and thousands of points on offer.

So it's a long season, a grueling season. It's a hell of an effort to win three in a row. Yeah, they obviously play well in their home conditions here. Raj is American and Joe went to college in the States. They clearly like the U.S. hard courts and they go well here.

Yeah, it's hard to talk about it, because I'm pretty upset. The more I talk, the more upset I get, because I feel like we should have won maybe or could have won today.

It's unfortunate, but that's sport.

Q. Matt, you always said about going for big titles and, you know, winning the big matches. At the start of the year if you were told that this is the kind of year you're gonna have and be in the finals here, would you have signed up for it?

ROHAN BOPANNA: He signed up before with Dodig.

MATTHEW EBDEN: I did sign up with Ivan (smiling).

Yes and no. No, I mean, look, of course, yes, look, I think we are No. 3 in the race or close to No. 1. If we won today we'd be No. 1 in the race. We're top 10. We're looking good for Turin.

There's still a lot of points on offer, a bit of work to do, for sure. Maybe that's our tournament to get. Maybe Shanghai or Paris Masters or Turin, maybe that's going to be our big one for this year.

Look, I mean, if you sign, I mean, probably most people at the start of tournaments, if you give them a semifinals at Wimbledon and a finals at US Open, they're probably not going to turn them down. It would be very hard to turn down (smiling).

But on the same time, if you look at four slams where we've probably realistically had a good shot to win, maybe two or three of those four, maybe the French it's a slightly tougher ask, but yeah, it's disappointing, but I'm pretty happy where we're at. I think we're building partnership.

There is also realities of life, sport, age, form, all those things. So to build a partnership to be, you know, between 1 to 3 in the race and be tracking well for Turin, slam finals, I'm pretty happy.

I'm pretty gut-wrenched, as well, as I'm sure Bops is. Yeah, it's a tough question. No, look, I think I'll sign up for it but we want to win those slams. Hopefully we can build on it and maybe next year or maybe Turin coming up is a big one, so we'll see.

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