

US OPEN

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New York, New York, USA

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

N. DJOKOVIC/B. Shelton

6-3, 6-2, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Straight sets, manageable 2 hours and 41 minutes. Can you talk about the efficiency of effort over the two weeks as you prepare now and your body to get ready for Sunday.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Thank you. Great to be able to win in straight sets. I thought everything was working really well and in my favor, two sets to love up and 4-2. Then things started to change. He had set point. I was serving for the match. Lost break. Maybe lost a little bit of a rhythm there.

Yeah, quite close ending to the match with crowd getting involved. So of course it wasn't easy, you know, to close this match out, but I'm really glad I did in three sets. Didn't want to take this match to fourth set, that's for sure.

Obviously I knew that he's got a lot of firepower. He has an amazing pop on the serve, he's just so dynamic and very unpredictable what comes next. I just had to stay there mentally, present, calm, and focus on the game plan and what I need to do and try to be solid from baseline, which for most of the match I have done and kind of made him play, made him uncomfortable.

Overall the tournament so far has been great. You know, I have been performing very well. Most of the matches went straight sets except one where I had to come back from two sets to love down. Other than that, the performance since Cincinnati first round to now to the finals have been really, really good.

So I'm really pleased with my tennis and the way I feel on the court. Now for the ultimate challenge and fighting for another Grand Slam title.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Novak, congrats on another slam final. On a big day for Serbian sports with the basketball team



winning, going to the finals, you didn't have to deal with the humidity this time, that allowed you to have a quality first two serving sets. Can you talk about that serving you had in the first two sets as well as the challenges he brought in the third set with his dynamic game.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, probably the best serving I have had so far in the tournament, and it was important considering I was playing a big server today.

I knew that I'm gonna get my looks and my opportunities on his serve, but, you know, it was probably even more important to really be comfortably holding my service games and trying to get that first-serve percentage high. Don't give him too many chances to come at my second serve and attack the second serve.

I think I have done really well, especially in the first two-and-a-half sets. You're right. I mean, with the roof closed, the problem of humidity was kind of removed, and we were still, you know, sweating a lot but I think much less than in the previous matches, which I think helps players, helps everyone, really.

In the end of the day, the quality of tennis is better, you know, because when it's super hot and humid, you know, players are kind of dragging themselves on the court and the quality of tennis is jeopardized. I think it's just better for everyone that we play in conditions where we're able to showcase our best tennis.

Q. A, at 36 with the opportunity at least to be the oldest man to win here professionally, I'm curious, does this opportunity mean any more to you or do you take it any different than you might have, say, 10 years ago or 8 years ago? And secondly, just the significance of your celebration there kind of calling back to his phone-call celebration on the court.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah. Well, fact is that at 36, every Grand Slam final, yeah, I don't know, could be the last one. So I think that I probably value these occasions and opportunities to win another slam as more than I have maybe 10 years ago, because 10 years ago I felt like, hey, I still have quite a few years ahead of me. I don't know how many I have ahead of me now, or I don't know how many of the years where I play four slams in the whole



season do I have in front of me.

So of course I am aware of the occasion. But I try to approach Sunday's match as basically any other match with intention to win, and I'll play my opponent. Knowing that it's going to be the toughest challenge, without a doubt, not just because it's a final but also because I'm playing -- you know, the two guys that the last time I faced both of them in a Grand Slam finals I lost; Carlos Wimbledon and then Daniil here in '21 US Open final.

So I understand the importance of that, and of course they are both in great shape. I think I'm in very good shape too, so I like my chances.

And I just love Ben's celebration (smiling). I thought it was very original, and I copied him. I stole his celebration (smiling).

Q. Congrats on another final. I know you're not one to look too far ahead, but this number that you're chasing here, 24, has some significance with Margaret Court, et cetera, and I just wonder how much that number in particular means to you, is there added significance to it?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Not really, to be honest. I'm not thinking about that. You know, as I said in the previous answer to the previous question, I'm aware that, you know, these kind of occasions where I play in a Grand Slam final at this stage is almost like a present that, you know, I need to accept and try to make the most out of it.

I was very close to make the 24 in London, but, you know, lost to a better player on that day in a close five-set match. I might be facing him actually again here, which I know that a lot of people wanted, you know, before this tournament started, considering our rivalry and the matches we played against each other when every single match went the distance in the last three occasions we faced each other.

So I understand I'm, you know, every time in a Grand Slam final it's another shot for history, you know, and I'm aware of it, and of course I'm very proud of it. But again, I don't have much time nor do I allow myself to reflect on these things or think about the history too much in this sense, you know, because when I did that in the past, like, '21 finals here I was maybe overwhelmed with the occasion and the opportunity and I underperformed.

So I don't want this to happen again, and I'll try to, you know, just focus on what needs to be done and tactically prepare myself for that match.

Q. When you do have those lulls like you had in the

third set, I know it's impossible to be perfect for entire matches all the time, but what goes on? You say you lose your rhythm, you felt uncomfortable. It just seems to suddenly like go away so quickly.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, I know. I wish it hasn't happened, but again, important thing is to bounce back and to try to recuperate after that, yeah, whatever you want to call it, a little black hole that you find yourself in for a few games where you're not really yourself, you're missing shots that you shouldn't, double faulting.

It's tension. I mean, there is no secret about it. We all feel it. Everyone feels tight in some moments of the match, particularly if it's a big match like this. Sometimes you manage to overcome it; sometimes you don't. That's okay. As long as you reset quickly and come back to the optimal level, which I think I have done. Again, I had two drops that I don't like, you know, at 4-3 and 6-5 serving for the match, again.

But, you know, it was crowd, it was his tennis, it was maybe my drop of level, it was combination of things that were happening. It's normal. You know, we all experience these kind of little setbacks on the court. But as I said, important is to kind of move that away as something that already has happened and focus on the next point.

Q. It's been a couple of years since you have been in this position over here. Do you think at all of what might have been, and if you could touch on the emotion of being back in this position? And also let's say if it is Carlos, what would be the more significant final you'd look back on: Wimbledon or Cincinnati?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Probably both, but I think maybe more recent one and just because it's played, it was played on hard court, Cincinnati. But different conditions Cincinnati to here. I'll probably look at his matches from this year, from last year, played at US Open, I'll look our matchups and we'll do our homework, so to say (smiling).

We do talk a lot about the tactics and the execution of the game plan. So I'm sure that we're gonna dig deep into that whether it's Carlos or Daniil across the net.

Q. You were 26 and 1 in major matches this year with one match left. What are your thoughts on what you've done to this point and how does that affect your perspective on the one that's left?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I mean, as I said, many times in the previous years, Grand Slams are the tournaments that still keep me going and motivate me the most to be able to practice hard every day and trying to get myself on



a level where I can compete with young guys.

No doubt that the Grand Slams are the biggest, you know, goals and objectives that I have. So I set my schedule so that I could perform at my best in these tournaments, and that's what happened again this year.

So I'm, you know, obviously over the moon with the results so far on Grand Slams. You know, playing in all four finals of all four slams in a season is amazing. It's the highest achievement I can think about when I start the season. That's what I dream about, that's what I really wanted, that's where I want to be, in this kind of position.

There is another match left, so of course, you know, conversation will be probably even better if I win a title in two days. But definitely whatever happens, I'm extremely, yeah, proud and content with what I have achieved this year in Grand Slams.

Q. Are you surprised at all that at 36, after all these years, you are still out here doing what you're doing, playing guys roughly half your age and reaching these, as you say, four Grand Slam finals this year?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I mean, I don't know. It probably sounds cocky or arrogant, but I'm not really surprised, because I know how much work and dedication and energy I put into trying to be in this position, so I know that I deserve this. I always believe in myself, in my own capabilities, you know, in my skills, in my quality as a tennis player to be able to deliver when it matters.

So I'm not really surprised, to be honest with you. Because I feel good. Physically I have been as fit or as prepared, as strong as, I don't want to say as ever, but, I mean, as good as I have been in the years and years.

So age is just a number, that phrase is resonating at the moment with me. And, you know, I don't want to even consider, you know, leaving tennis or thinking about an end if I'm still at the top of the game.

You know, I just don't see a reason for that. I will probably consider doing that if I get my ass kicked by young guys in the Grand Slams in the years to come in the earlier stages, and then I'll probably say, okay, maybe it's time to move on.

But so far, you know, I still feel that I'm in the game.

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