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Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/D. Medvedev

6-3, 7-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Champ, congratulations.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: For the final time, straight sets, three hours and 17 minutes. Magnificent. Let's go to the audience to take the questions.

Questions.

Q. Congratulations. Talk about being the perfect comeback kid ever. You came back in Australia, won Adelaide and the Australian Open. You came here to the United States, won Cincinnati, and the US Open. Just what is it about you that makes it so much easier to make all these, like, difficult comebacks in all these moments?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I wouldn't say probably was easy. Easier comparing to what exactly, we don't know, because I don't think too many players were in that position.

Yeah, I guess people have comeback stories. I love them too. They motivate me. Obviously different circumstances, Australia and here. I haven't played any tournament on American soil for two years, and the last time I was here I lost in the finals against the same player I beat today.

You know, I really did my best in the last 48 hours not to allow the importance of the moment and what's on the line get to my head, because two years ago that's what happened, and I underperformed and I wasn't able to be at my best and I was outplayed.

So I learned my lesson. My team, my family knew that the last 24 hours, don't touch me, don't speak to me about, you know, the history of what's on the line (smiling).

I really did my best to keep things quite simple and stick to the routines that brought me to where I am and treat this

match really as any other match where I just need to win.

But of course, you know, lots of different thoughts going through your head. What if, what-if scenarios, images that you have in your mind of, you know, what will look like if you win. And also if you lose, you know, so I'm trying to block those ones.

But yeah, it was a big battle, I think, within, in the last 24 hours to really just, you know, keep things simple and clear and prepare for this match in a right way, which I think I have done. I started match really well. I'll just keep talking, because I guess these questions are related to this (smiling).

What probably made the difference and the key of the match was second set, almost two hours. I don't think I have ever played a longer set in my life, particularly not on this occasion against a top player like Daniil.

Yeah, I think he was probably a better player in the second set. He deserved to win that set more than I did. Somehow I managed to turn things around in the tiebreak. When it mattered I put one ball into play more than he did. And that was enough.

And after that, you know, set break, I regained my energy. So the third set was, I felt better than I did in the second. Honestly, in the second I felt like I was losing air on so many occasions, and my legs, as well. I don't recall being so exhausted after rallies really as I have been in the second set.

But, you know, again, that's the occasion. That's when you play, you know, Daniil, who is one of the best players in the world in making you play always an extra shot, and he has a big serve. When he hits his spot and he puts pressure on your service games and on and on it goes, you know, it's like an never-ending story, really.

So I was very relieved to win the second set and then, you know, I was just praying that he's going to miss the last ball in the match point. I was not thinking about celebrations or anything like that. It was just about really winning the match and then hugging my daughter and son, my wife, parents, you know, closest people that were here as my family, my team.



That was what I wanted to do first, you know, to share these emotions with them.

Q. Winning seven of the last ten Grand Slams you have participated in since 2021, did you make any adjustments going into that year? Was there any change when you went into '21 that has allowed you to go on this surge?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: There are always changes happening, literally on a weekly to monthly basis in my approach to training, to recovery, to mental training. There's always something that I'm trying to add so that I can up my performance in my game, you know, at least for a few percent.

It's a constant process of trying to get better and trying to implement certain things that work for you and finding that formula.

When you find it, you know, the biggest I feel like, one of the biggest lessons I have learned probably mentally throughout my career is that, you know, even if you find a formula that works, it's not a guarantee, and actually most likely it's not going to work the next year.

You need to reinvent yourself, because everyone else does. As a 36-year-old competing with 20-year-olds I probably have to do it more than I have ever done it in order to keep my body in shape, in order to be able to recover so that I can perform on the highest level consistently.

Also mentally and emotionally to still keep the right balance between motivation so that I'm actually inspired and motivated to play the best tennis and to compete with these guys and to actually not let go in the moments when I maybe can, and at the same time keep the playfulness and passion for the sport.

Because, you know, I can be very -- how can I say -- down on myself and go into really high-stress moments, you know, on the practice days or matches. You know, you spend a lot of energy. But I guess, you know, maybe you can call me perfectionist.

I mean, I know I'm not the only one. I know there is a lot of great champions in different sports that thrive on this kind of approach to perfect themselves, their approach, their game, their performance, their recovery, every single day. On and on. That's why LeBron James still keeps going at his age, or Tom Brady, you know, greats like that, that are inspiring.

That's basically it. You know, it's a constant, evolving

process of me trying to implement certain things that will give me an edge over the young guns.

Q. Congratulations. When you lost at Wimbledon, some people wondered, was this the start of a passing of the torch. How did that match affect your thought process and your performance since?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I mean, people like to talk obviously. So there is a lot of different opinions out there.

I mean, it's not my interest and neither business to really review what everyone talks about or thinks, whether there is a passing of the torch or new gen, next gen, future gen, whatever you want to call it, happening or not happening in the sport.

You know, I focus on what I need to do and how I get myself in an optimal state so that I can win the biggest trophies in our sport. That's what I care about.

It's great for our sport that I have very good rivalries with Alcaraz, no doubt. He's such a refreshment for tennis, great player, amazing player, great guy as well.

So I think, you know, collectively we all want more attention and interest going towards the tennis. The more people get involved with tennis in whatever shape or form, the better it is for all of us. But, look, in the end of the day, my goal was always, at the beginning of the season, to try to win all Grand Slams.

You know, I would definitely sign right away the paper if somebody would tell me I would win three out of four and play Wimbledon finals. There is a little regret that I didn't win that Wimbledon finals. But, look, in the end of the day, you know, I have so much more to be happier and content with than actually to regret something.

I'm going to keep going. You know, I feel good in my own body. I still feel I got the support of my environment, of my team, of my family.

Grand Slams, I have vocalized that in the last few years, have been always the highest goal and the priority of mine in the whole season. I don't play as much in terms of other tournaments, so I try to, you know, prioritize my preparation so that I can peak in slams.

Yeah, these are the moments and these are the kind of emotions that I motivate myself with every single day when I'm not playing a tournament. Yeah, occasionally asking myself, why do I need this still at this stage after all I have done, you know? How long do I want to keep going? I do have these questions in my head, of course.

But knowing that I play at such a high level still and I win the biggest tournaments in this sport, yeah, I don't want to get rid of this sport or I don't want to leave this sport if I'm still at the top, you know, if I'm still playing the way I'm playing.

Q. How does this dominant year compare with your other dominant years when you were going up against Roger and Rafa and Andy mainly in terms of playing them and, you know, you had such distinct rivals then and then playing this crew where it's a different opponent...

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Four times different opponent. Yeah, right.

It's different, because the rivalries I had with these guys were so strong and solid that it was very high probability that I'll face either Roger or Rafa or Andy in the finals of a slam for most of those years when we were facing each other at the highest of the levels.

Nowadays, that's different. I don't mind playing different players in the slams as long as I win (smiling). But I did play three epic matches with Alcaraz this year, and I think that's why there is a discussion or debate on the next rivalry.

I said all I needed to say in a positive way about Carlos, I do really mean it. I think it's great for our sport that we have another very good rivalry. I know he has also great rivalry with Sinner, and you have Rune, you have these guys, you have of course generation of Zverev, Tsitsipas, Medvedev, these guys that are still top 5, top 10 in the world. They are great players.

I think judging by the attendance of people in all slams and, you know, the kind of a hype that goes around Grand Slams, tennis is still in a good place. You know, players come and go. It will be the same kind of destiny for me. Eventually one day I will leave tennis in about 23, 24 years. (Laughter.) And there is going to be new young players coming up. Until then, I guess you'll see me a bit more.

Q. You talked about blocking out the magnitude of the moment, that you may not have been able to do here two years ago. What exactly did you feel? I mean, was it relief? Was it joy? What was going through your mind in that moment?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: After the last point?

Q. Yeah.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Relief mostly. That's why I didn't -- yeah, I don't know. I didn't celebrate maybe as I did in Roland Garros or didn't fall to the floor or jump out of joy. I just, I was so relieved when I saw his forehand in the net. Out of respect, I wanted to go quicker to the net to shake hands and exchange words.

And then the next thing I wanted is to hug my daughter, because she was there sitting in the front row. I didn't know that she's gonna be seated there. We had way too many people for too little seats in the player box (smiling). Yeah, my wife was taking care of that with my team. I didn't know who was going to sit where.

Then when I got to the court, I saw her. She was facing me when I was sitting on the bench. And she smiled at me. Every single time I needed, I guess that kind of innocent child energy, I got it from her. You know, when I was going through the very stressful moments, particularly in the second set when I needed a little bit of a push, of a strength, of, yeah, just lightness, I guess, she gave me a smile, a fist pump.

She was into it. You know, it's so funny to see that and so interesting to see that she's six years old, my son is nine, and they were both there. They're both aware of what's happening. When I became a father that was one of my wishes, that I would live the day to experience winning a slam in front of them and they realize what's going on, that they are old enough to understand what's going on.

Yeah, I'm just super blessed that that was the case twice this year in front of them, in Paris and also here.

Q. Was there an event, a moment, something where you thought to yourself that you wanted to target 24 or 25 because of the significance of those numbers and then later was there a moment where you did say to yourself, Okay, I can get there? Finally, we all want to know, are you now a full-time serve-and-volleyer?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Okay. I said on the court that my childhood goal was to win Wimbledon and be No. 1 in the world, and when I realized that, then obviously I had to set new goals. Because goals are important, you know, to motivate you so that you have clarity in your preparation, in your day-to-day, what you do on a daily, on a weekly basis in order for you to actually reach the destination where you're headed. I think that's super important for every athlete.

So I was setting new goals higher and higher and higher as my career progressed. But to be honest with you, I was probably not thinking so intensely and concretely about the history of the weeks at No. 1 or most slams until maybe

three years ago. Then I realized, okay, I'm quite close for weeks in No. 1. I also have a pretty good chance at the Grand Slams if I keep healthy and if I'm playing well.

Of course the slams at that point seemed a little bit less reachable than weeks of No. 1, but I believed. I believed that I'll make it.

I don't put any number right now in my mind on how many slams I want to win until the end of my career. I don't really have any number.

I'll continue to prioritize them as my most important tournaments and where I want to play the best tennis. So that will not change. That will stay the same in the next season or I don't know how many more seasons I have in my legs. So let's see.

Q. Congratulations. You just talked about this and on the court, your childhood dream was winning a Wimbledon title. Here you are at 24. What do you think that seven- or eight-year-old version of you would think if you knew you were going to win 24?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: At that point, that was definitely not a dream. I think I was already shooting very far as a seven-year-old dreaming of Wimbledon and No. 1 in the world.

I mean, that was already, you know, incredibly high ambition for someone coming from a family with no tennis tradition, for a boy in Serbia going through sanctions and embargo, war-torn country, and being part of the very expensive and unaffordable, unaccessible sport.

The odds were pretty much against me and my family, but, you know, we did it. I say "we," because I owe a lot to my family, to my parents who sacrificed so much for me to be here. And that's not a cliché. I really mean it. It was extremely, extremely difficult with lots of adversities that they had to face and atrocities that when you think about it, you know, the last thing you want to think about is supporting maybe your child in expensive sport.

It was more about bringing the bread to the kitchen table, you know, at that point. So reflecting on the whole journey, it's been an incredible, incredible ride that we all can be very proud of.

This kind of upbringing, really, and experiences I had in childhood really allows me to appreciate this moment or any other moments that I experienced, big moments in my career in the history of this sport.

I wasn't at that point, as I said, dreaming of making that

kind of history, because it seemed to be really far off, far away.

But, yeah, maybe three, four years ago, I started to believe that, you know, I have a pretty good shot, pretty good chance. Yeah.

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