

BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, March 12, 2017

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference

N. DJOKOVIC/K. Edmund

6-4, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How do you stay in the moment when the break was so close at the end and there were so many nerves?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It's a good question. Thank you.

Well, you try to keep things simple, stay with your patterns and what you do the best and where you feel most comfortable.

Obviously you try and focus only on what's coming up next. That's the only thing you can influence. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. You can only do as much. You know, whatever you can influence, you try to do it the best way possible.

Q. Today you looked like close to your vintage self out there, especially the first set.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, I think I played very well in the first set. Second set was obviously up and down. But credit to Kyle for playing some really aggressive tennis and, you know, taking it all out. He made a lot of winners in the beginning and midway through the second.

There was not much wrong I did. I did miss some forehands. But other than that, it was a very solid match. Good, quality tennis, a good test.

I'm just pleased with the overall performance.

Q. You're in a historic quarter here. I know you have to take it a match at a time, but are you thinking about really pacing yourself and knowing it's just going to be a constant string of tough opponents?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I don't have the luxury of pacing myself. I'm playing Del Potro now. I have to give it all. That's what it takes to beat this guy, who is -- even though he is not ranked as high and he hasn't played that many tournaments but definitely one of the best players in the world last year, especially in the second part of the year, winning Davis Cup, you know, silver medal for his country, you know, beating myself and



Wawrinka in Wimbledon.

You know, he's tough player to beat. He's big guy, big serve, big forehand. Definitely not the draw that you like early in the tournament and that you wish for, but it is what it is. I have played him some weeks ago in Acapulco. Very close match. You know, it went down to last couple of points. I don't expect anything less than that. Very even match, and I've got to give it all.

To answer your question shortly, I can't really pace myself and think about what's coming up after that, because I really have, you know, tough players to beat in the next round.

Q. Last year you were at the highest of highs when you completed the Grand Slam, but then you played Del Potro in the Olympics. That must have been a tough loss for you. Can you reflect on that loss? How much did that hurt because it was the Olympics?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, sure. I mean, Olympic Games come every four years. They were one of the goals, one of the priorities of the season for me. Obviously I was just trying to, you know, aim to play my best there. Unfortunately, I had that little injury, as well, of the left wrist.

But on the other hand, I had also one of the toughest draws that I can have in the first round. Played two tiebreaks. He was just a better player in the clutch moments.

He went on to fight for gold medal. So, I mean, he played very well, you know, in that tournament, beating Rafa and some big players.

Surely, you know, I wish that I could go further in the Olympic Games, because I felt like at that stage of my life, my career, that's when I was playing my best tennis. Winning Toronto before that, everything was fine, and then just unfortunate circumstances as result of that.

You learn from those experiences. I don't look back with regret or disappointment. Surely I wanted things to go differently. But at the end of the day, I try to be grateful for whatever comes my way, because I know it comes with a reason.

So after that, obviously I was not up to standard of the results that I have had in previous years. You know, last couple of months of '16 were tough for me emotionally. I was struggling on the court to really find that comfort, find the confidence, as well.

But, you know, this is a different year, different season, obviously. There are new kids on the block, new players. Everybody is working hard to take away the top spots from the top players.

You know, I am aware of the fact that I need to work as hard as they do or even harder to keep that, you know, keep going and playing on a high level and keep making success.

Q. We're in an era where three different guys have just won the career slam, a couple of women also active now. Nobody has been able to win all nine Masters. The Big 4, all of you are getting close. How would that be to cross that finish line, which you have a chance to do. Well, Andy lost here, and he needed this and Monte-Carlo. How much would that mean to you to get that in Cincinnati even though that's a ways down the road?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Of course. I mean, of course it certainly is one of the motivations. I mean, it is one of the milestones that I have opportunity to achieve. And, of course, it does give me that, as I said, motivation to try to win Cincinnati where I played, I think, four finals in my life.

But as you said, you know, Andy, Rafa, Roger, they are all very close. They all need one or two to accomplish that, as well.

We have to give credit to Masters events, Masters 1000 events. In tennis, we know that Grand Slams are biggest events we have, and we mostly talk about them, but we should also talk about the importance and value that we have in these tournaments, as well.

I do care a lot about Masters events. I think they always bring the best players in the world together, and, you know, some events, like in Europe, you have in one week every single day top quality matches, best players in the world competing at high level. That's something you don't have even in Grand Slam. That's why it makes it even more difficult to go back-to-back days and win against Top 5, Top 10 players.

You know, I have had an amazing 1000 series, or Masters tournaments, career, winning 30. And, you know, that's one of the reasons why I'm here is because I value these tournaments as much as I value a Grand Slam. I want to try to do as best I can.

Q. Going back to today's match -- sorry if this is a very British question -- but you have played Kyle three times in the last 12 months. Can you see a change in development of him over that period? And, if so, what is it?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes, I see improvement. I expected that, because I know he's a hard working guy. He has a good team around him. Very powerful, as well. Big forehand. He improved his backhand, I think. Backhand was not as accurate as forehand from back of the court, but now he's coming in, stepping, bringing some variety from that angle.

And obviously his serve. He has a really good kick. I think the first serve can also be slightly better, because he's a tall guy.

But, you know, he's on the right path. You know, his results in the last 12 months are showing that. He's just one or one-and-a-half years experienced in the top level, so, you know, he still has time.

Q. Just curious about your thoughts on Andy Murray losing yesterday. Were you surprised by that?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I mean, of course it's always surprising when you see a top player losing early in the big events, but, you know, it happens.

Pospisil, I haven't seen the match, I have seen highlights after that, and I have seen Pospisil was spending a lot of time at the net, you know, serve and volleying after first and second serve, which was, you know, pretty risky tactic against one of the best returners of all time, but it worked very well.

You know, he played amazing. You know, he was very focused. Obviously very determined and it was a close match, especially in the second set. But, you know, from what I have seen he was a better player.

And I'm sure that Andy won't be too shaken up by this loss. He's obviously going to prepare best he can for Miami.

Q. Dimitrov started very well this season. I was wondering if you're happy to see him back at such a level?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes. Well, we didn't have a chance to train in Monaco together, but he was there. You know, I have seen him train. Because he left earlier to spend some time in Miami, as well. But he's a resident of Monaco, so I get to see him there. We get to practice obviously together in different periods of the year.

He's a really nice guy and someone who works hard. You know, he struggled obviously in the last three, four years mentally to kind of keep the consistency with his results.

But everybody, as soon as he, you know, made a breakthrough to the top 50 of the world, you know, everybody saw him as the next Roger, you know, because obviously they have similar styles of the game. He always had those high expectations on his back, a lot of pressure.

But I think he matured a lot. You know, it seems like things got together for him this year, this season. I mean, he started very, very well, and he's playing very good.