

BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, March 12, 2017

Roger Federer

Press Conference



R. FEDERER/S. Robert

6-2, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You looked like you were moving amazing out there. Feeling good? How's the knee?

ROGER FEDERER: Good. Very happy. Knee is a thing of the past, which is great. I don't even have to think or talk about it. So I thought the match went really well. Rocky start in the beginning, just finding the groove, finding the rhythm, seeing the ball.

I'm very pleased how it went. And, yeah, moving on to the next round, it's going to be different. It's going to be different matchup, so I've got to adjust again.

Q. (Question regarding older players playing well.)

ROGER FEDERER: Good question. I'm not sure what it is that clicked in his game or in his head or what happened, or if it just paid off to, you know, keep doing what you're doing, figuring it out. Maybe scheduling, maybe it is work ethic, maybe it was a coaching change. I don't know what it is.

I think it would be very interesting to do interviews with those players who are sort of late-bloomers who did it late in their career. I find it fascinating, too, because you would think you're in your best period between maybe 23 and 28.

So I admire those guys, though, to make the breakthrough later on and find a way and not lose love for the game early. Because it's easy, you know, because you're playing mostly on the challenger tour or maybe even future tournament, satellites way back when like when Stephane started like I did.

So it's nice to see him do well now and beginning to play against great players on the big courts. I think that's been so motivational for those guys to keep going. All of a sudden, age really just becomes a number.

Q. Maria Sharapova is coming back on the tour next month after her ban. Tournaments are weighing whether or not to give her wildcards because she will have no ranking. A few already

have. What are your thoughts on that process? It's sort of unprecedented in tennis to have a big superstar coming off a ban like this.

ROGER FEDERER: It's a tough one. What do you want me to tell you? Like you said, because it's the first, it kind of is what it is. You know, some people will like it; some people won't.

She paid the price for what she did, so that's all you can say there.

I see the argument of players being or people being turned off by it to get wildcards, to others who believe, well, she served her time. It's all cool now. It's all over.

You could definitely revisit the rule potentially, which is to decide is it really just up to the tournaments, that one tournament director to decide if maybe Maria, or anybody now, just hypothetically speaking, deserves a wildcard or not, you know, after a ban. Or should wildcards not be part of the equation, certain level of tournaments?

I'm not sure. I think it's a good debate to have, for sure, but at the same time, you know, it's a tricky one. I'm sure she's happy that she's back playing.

Q. To me, on court you look as fast as you have ever been. I wonder if you feel that's the case, and how do you do on the fitness test compared to, say, 10 years ago?

ROGER FEDERER: I don't do any fitness tests. Thank God I'm past that stage. I used to hate them. I really didn't enjoy them, especially as a young kid. We always had to do the 12-minute run. I don't know if in other countries you have to do. Yeah, all out for 12 minutes. Other test, check you, your speed. Sometimes they would check how stretched you are and stuff, and you realize you're terrible. You're like, Does that mean I can't play tennis?

Because I have been working with the same fitness coach for so long, he knows exactly what's good and bad, and he sees when I move bad or not. Then he tweaks it so I don't have to do the test, thank God, no more.

It's true I feel really good. I feel fast. I think it did pay off that I worked as hard as I did in the offseason and

that I actually could work hard. It was very exciting for such a long period of time. And I think I'm definitely still benefiting from it.

Q. What has Ivan brought to your game and how is that similar and different from what Edberg was bringing to you?

ROGER FEDERER: I think -- weird to say this, but we're still sort of in the beginning stages, because I hardly played last year. I played one tournament where I felt normal last year. That was at the Australian Open. All the other tournaments there was something wrong, either sick or injured or hurt or the knee not right.

I have basically had two tournaments with him, both Australian Opens, if you like. But I have been around him now, did a lot of practice. He's very eager. He's got great work ethic, great attitude towards the game. He was a good friend of mine already before we started working.

I think he really wants me to do well and he makes me feel that, which makes me feel better then again. I like his attitude on the court, as well. I see he's intense, he's focused. And he gives me good advice.

Like with Stefan, I don't ask that much from my coaches. It could be that one advice at the right time. I feel Stefan has done that many, many times in my career. Ivan helped me throughout the tougher moments to stay positive, and at the Australian Open he gave me key advice during the tournament, which is, looking back, I think, very important.

Q. An off-court question. There are so many products you endorse. You have your own logo. Do you, by any chance, see yourself as a brand as well?

ROGER FEDERER: Me personally, no, because I'm a tennis player. That's what I see myself doing. Philanthropist, you know, a dad, and a husband. Kind of really simple, to be quite honest.

Then if you dig deeper and you, you know, peel off the layers and stuff, I'm sure if you ask Tony, of course, he's much more to it. And I do speak to him a lot just about how we can maintain great relationships with everybody, and how we can do good for the game and so forth.

You know, there is definitely more to it, but I try not to see it that way, even though probably it is.

Q. Is there a certain lightness that's come with that 18th slam? You seem to be very relaxed and having fun. To see you dropping to the ground

doing the push-ups with the kids, you just seem...
ROGER FEDERER: That's not because of 18. It's not like, I didn't win a slam in a long time. I'm not doing any push-ups. No. (Laughter.)

I think it was a beautiful thing that happened for my team and for myself down in Australia.

I think I should play very relaxed this year, not just here, not just in Miami, not just in Dubai, wherever I'm going to go. I really hope I can play with this lightness, this freshness throughout, because I worked so hard to get to 18 the last five years. It's not always been easy, especially with injuries.

And losing some tough matches, but I did have good moments, too, you know. I won a lot of tournaments, beat a lot of the top guys, basically all of them. But then basically won the Davis Cup, which is big for us, for me.

So it wasn't all bad, you know, like maybe people make it sound like there was this huge lull or a bad stretch. It wasn't. It was just one that I couldn't get a slam because of Novak, mostly. So I'm happy I finally got it.

And, yeah, sure, show up with more motivation and excitement. I have to be careful of any letdown after the Australian Open. I think it's real. That's why I'm really out there, like today, pushing myself on, one more point, shot-for-shot, point-for-point mentality. So important to see and not look too far ahead and think things are going to come easy.

If you watch Novak today or Rafa, margins are small. If you're not up to your best, you're struggling. You might lose. Saw it with Andy yesterday. It happens so quickly.

That's why I'm really pushing for me to have good energy on the court.

Q. The other day when you were reflecting on your time off and your career, you said something very interesting where you said, I need extremely little. Could you reflect on that, on sort of what your core happiness is and how that integrates to getting all this incredible adulation and all this on-court performance and the titles?

ROGER FEDERER: I need very little in terms of happiness, you mean?

Q. Yeah.

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, I'm just happy being surrounded by family and friends. That's good enough for me. Not lying, winning helps to be happy, because losing ain't fun when you travel around the world and

you play a shocker match and you're, like, Now what? Now you have to sit there. That didn't feel good. And then, you know, you've got to wait until you get your next shot.

But other than that, I'm just really happy with very little. Exactly what that is, it could be anything. Could be dinner with friends. Could be seeing someone again, reading a book to my boys and my girls. I don't know what it is. It could be the most simplest little thing.

I guess the urge for normality, as well, to some extent that we try to create wherever we go because we live in this funky bubble, tennis world, hotels and all that. It's not the norm, so I'm aware of that. We try to go out and about and discover stuff. It makes me happy when I get away from it all.

Q. When there is this frenzy like the other day at practice, like Beatlemania, what goes through your head when you see the fans...

ROGER FEDERER: It's great. I'm happy for the tournament. I'm happy for tennis, that there seems to be an excitement, and then I appreciate that there is so many, I don't know, that buy my caps and feel connected that way, or a shirt or whatever it may be, a racquet. I get a chance, you know, take a picture with them or sign an autograph for them or make a dream come true, you know.

Because maybe many people will never get to see a tennis tournament ever again because either it costs a lot of money or they come from far away.

So I always try to tell myself that that person I might have taken a picture with I will maybe never see again. That's why I try to make that moment memorable for the people. Unfortunately, I can't sign them all. I think most fans understand that. That's why I don't get booed if I walk away, even though I could only sign 10%.

It's nice that especially here there are so many fans that come to practice, and that queue for autographs and pictures, I appreciate that.

Q. I know you have been friends with Tommy Haas for a long time and played doubles. What are your thoughts on seeing him in this new role as tournament director and your thoughts on the tournament picking somebody like him? Sort of a new start for them and a new direction?

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, look, I like Tommy a lot. I think he's a great guy. If he's going to do something, he will do it with all his heart. He's very hard working. Trying super hard. I love to see him in this role. I love seeing former champs doing what he's doing, giving

back to the game, essentially.

You know, sort of stepping halfway out. He still wants to play. I think it's wonderful. I told him sometimes, yeah, just think about it, how much more you want, because you've got this great role here now. But it's great that he wants to go out on his terms.

I think it's going to be a great asset for this tournament, because he has a lot of ideas, a lot of ideas. So that's going to keep him busy for years to come, which is good.

Q. Was your 18th Grand Slam most special because of the way you came off injury?

ROGER FEDERER: Possibly. It's in the top five of all slams. I don't know if it beats my first one, because the first one, it was a dream come true, so that maybe beats everything.

French Open, I chased that one. And then when it did happen, it was unbelievable what it meant to me and the support I got in Paris.

I don't know. Winning at the US Open against Agassi, one of my big and best performance potentially, winning in that atmosphere, under that pressure, being World No. 1 and defending against him, who maybe people thought he was going to retire if he won.

This one now after the comeback and the injury, it was by far the biggest surprise. It was more surprising than, say, my first one in '03. But, yeah, every one is special. This one is right up there.