

BNP Paribas Open

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

Rafael Nadal

Press Conference

R. NADAL/F. Verdasco

6-3, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I guess you're pleased to win this one in two sets against such an opponent?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, I think I played a solid match. I played a good match, no? Very aggressive with my serve, serving well, hitting good forehands, good backhands.

Very happy. I think I played much better today than the first day. Yeah, it was a good win. I played two horrible games, terrible. That's it. For the rest of the match, I think I played very well.

Q. You obviously played Fernando a number of times. You know each other quite well. Is there something that he did today that was not what had happened in previous matches? Did you try something new?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I know, since the season started, I was playing well. So I tried to play my game, tried to play aggressive.

My goal was don't let him play with his forehand from easy positions. And that's what I tried. I started well the match. Then taked a while to have the break, but finally I had in the right game, in the 4-3, and I closed well.

So in the second I started with the break, and then happened what happened with those two games. Then I was there again.

So very pleased with my performance. And I won already two matches here. Playing a little bit better today than two days ago. Tomorrow another chance to go on court, and I'm going to try to play better than I did today.

Q. You have known Roger for so long, you're friends, and, of course, you're great rivals, played so many times. If you had to say what is the one thing about Roger's game that makes him so special, what would you say if you had to boil it down?



RAFAEL NADAL: Everything (smiling). Yeah, he has the talent to do very difficult things that looks easy, you know. He's able to take the ball very early, serve and first shot. He create a lot of winners with that, two first shots, no?

And then he's able to take the ball always from inside, and he's very quick going to the net. If you play short ball, then you know that he gonna go inside and gonna hit a winner, gonna play a shot that hit forehand or backhand, go to the net, and you are going to be in big trouble.

Q. Backhand in Melbourne was improved?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah. His backhand in Melbourne was one of the best days that I played against him. Yeah.

Q. You said before the tournament that you didn't want to talk about the draw because it hadn't played out yet. Now that we have arrived at this point and we have Djokovic and Delpo and Kyrgios and Zverev, and maybe you against Roger, what are your comments on this bottom of the quarter?

RAFAEL NADAL: No, I never said I didn't want to talk about the draw. I said we can talk about the draw.

But the real thing, I have the first round against Pella and then, if I win, Verdasco, and now I have Roger or Steve Johnson and now we can talk about...

Q. Maybe the other matches that have come to fruition, the big match we have tonight, what are your thoughts on that?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah. I think is unlucky part of the draw for everybody. I think part of the tournament, even if they can have good matches, is probably not the best thing to have that matches that early in the tournament, for the players is not good, because good players, for sure, going to go out early.

And sometimes top players, sometimes if top players are playing well, then they have the chance to go to the final rounds, no?

In this case, doesn't matter if everybody is playing well, because from our part of the draw, only one of us gonna be in that semifinals.

So that's tough, but that's not happening every week. Only thing we can do to avoid that is be in higher position of the ranking.

Q. If it does turn out to be Roger that you face, this will be the earliest you guys have met since the very first time you guys faced each other in 2004. What are your memories of going into that match? You were 17. He was established already. What were your thoughts?

RAFAEL NADAL: I don't remember very well (smiling). It was a long time ago.

I went on court, nothing to lose. A lot of motivation to play against, I think, No. 1 already. The motivation to play against him.

This is not like now that I want to win, and I want to be in the final round, and I want to fight for the tournament. In that moment, I had 17. And for me to play with Roger, doesn't matter if it was in that early round, I don't feel it was unlucky for me. It was a beautiful match, and I tried to go out on court and enjoy it and fight for it.

Q. You're such a great defender of break points. And tennis being a sport where not necessarily winning all the points but winning important points really matters, how do you train for that? With the academy and working with young kids now, how do you instill that in somebody when they're young?

RAFAEL NADAL: You cannot work specifically about that, no? You need to, work every time, not only tennis part but in real life, because you need to accept the past situations. And the most important thing is have the right self-confidence, no?

I think I had that self-control not always. I had most of the part of my career, because I practiced since I was a kid with high intensity. I practiced with a lot of pressure every day. My uncle was pushing me a lot from the beginning, so that was a big help for us later to be ready to accept injuries, to accept the tough moments.

But that's a work of every day, no? You need to create to yourself certain problems to overcome those situations.

Q. Do the conditions here favor you particularly because of the high bounce or you don't really care? Because you like also fast hard courts.

RAFAEL NADAL: I don't know. I played well here. I played well in very fast courts. Montreal, one of the fastest, I won a couple of times.

Depends if I am playing well. Then I can play well in all of the surfaces and all the conditions. If I am not, I

cannot play well in no one.

But the history says that this tournament works well for me, you know. I played a lot of semifinals here, winning three times, and played a final a lot of times in the semifinals.

When that happens, that means that the tournament adjust well to your conditions.

Q. You are involved in your academy, and then raising next generation young kids. As a top player currently playing now, how does it benefit you as a player playing in the field competing very hard with other competitors and, at the same time, raising, you know, next generation in your academy? How does the two get together?

RAFAEL NADAL: I am not teaching them. You know, I am just try to give them some advice when I am there. You know, I practice with kids in the academy a lot of times, almost every day when I am there, and I just try to give them some advices and tips when I am practicing with them, no?

But I think we have a fantastic team of coaches, coaches with a lot of experience in this world.

For me, is a big privilege and happy to have the chance to have an academy and have the chance to create the plays that the kids can feel very comfortable there. They can study, they can practice at the highest level possible, I believe, with the best coaches possible and with the right people around, no?

And we try to do things the best way that we can. For us, it's so important to educate well them, to give them the right values for the future, and at the same time, try to practice at the highest level possible to try to have the kids become professional tennis players.