

BNP Paribas Open

Friday, March 17, 2017

Jack Sock

Press Conference

J. SOCK/K. Nishikori

6-3, 2-6, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Talk a little bit what it feels like to get your first top-5 win.

JACK SOCK: Yeah, it feels great. Yeah, I didn't realize that until after, you know, he was saying it on court. Yeah, it's a great feeling.

I thought it was tricky conditions out there today for both guys. First match for me there was a lot of wind and for a lot of reasons a tricky match, but I was able to stay solid through most of it and come out with the win.

Q. What would you rather have, a win over a top-5 player or reaching for the first time a semifinal at a Masters 1000? For you, which is bigger?

JACK SOCK: I was going to say, well, I thought both happened. But, yeah, probably first semifinal. I made a couple of quarters now. But, you know, top-5 win was hopefully, you know, inevitable at one point I was going to get that.

But to get to my first semi at one of my favorite tournaments of the year, it feels very special to play in front of the home crowd. It's so great here. They really get behind you and support not only me but all of the Americans, as well.

Yeah, just to advance and keep going, play another match, feels good.

Q. What kind of challenge has it been, four three-setters in four matches? What does that say about your conditioning, where you're at?

JACK SOCK: Hopefully says a lot. The doubters in the past, you know, can't really say much anymore. Yeah, I feel good physically. I actually feel almost stronger as the tournament has gone on. You know, I have done the proper recovery and everything I need to after matches.

And, yeah, it's definitely been some pretty hot temperatures this week. Quick turnarounds for me, as well. Other night with Grigor and Jaziri. And then today and Roger not playing, you know, and me going



out and playing and having to -- I think they said I'm second after 11:00 tomorrow.

So, yeah, hopefully keep the press and stuff short and get to the recovery stuff (smiling) and get ready for tomorrow.

Q. The numbers weren't great, but your serve was giving Kei a lot of trouble. Can you talk about your service game and the strategy?

JACK SOCK: Yeah, I think every player knows, everyone that watches knows the day and night difference and how lively the ball is, how much it gets up on these courts. There's a tremendous difference. I saw when John was playing the other night, from day to night for him is an eight-inch difference on his serve.

For me, obviously kick serve and forehand, two shots for me that really -- your serve in general, you know, but kick serve especially on these courts is deadly for me, I think.

So that was a big part of the game plan for me today going in was -- you know, if Kei is hitting the ball in the strike zone, he is going to beat pretty much anyone in the world and can on any given today.

For me, it was all about trying to get him out of that slot and let him not be taking balls at his hip and waist and dictating play. So the kick serve for me today was crucial, first and second serve, and that's why I used it a lot.

Q. Having a great start to 2017. What do you attribute that to and what's really working for you?

JACK SOCK: Yeah, I have said it all year. I think it's the offseason. Just put in -- made some changes, put in a lot of good work, physically, mentally, everything put together. I think it's showing this year.

But obviously physically I think I have been making the right strides for some time now. I just kept adding to it in the offseason. But I think the mental side of it is probably the biggest difference so far this year.

I think last year and a half, two years, the matches I have been winning this year, especially this tournament, you know, I probably wouldn't have been winning year and a half, two years ago.

Q. With Roger's win in Melbourne and his run here...

JACK SOCK: He won in Melbourne? (Smiling).

Q. Yeah. There is such a burst of adoration for him. What is it like going on court? Is there a kind of locker room effect at all? How do you deal with that you're going to be facing him?

JACK SOCK: Yeah, I mean, he's -- in my opinion, he's the best to ever play. It will be definitely a challenge. You know, it's a testament to him and his ability and skill and taking that much time off and coming back and winning the first major of the year and playing the tennis he's been playing this year.

So, you know, you have that side of it. And then the other side of the matches, maybe for him, like in Dubai where he's going in playing confident tennis and loses to a guy like Donskoy, once again a guy playing well, I think.

And the trend of tennis now, if a guy is playing well at any ranking can give any guy trouble. That's another reason why you see that result, those type of results throughout this year.

Yeah, I mean, when I played him here last and I played him in Basel a couple years ago, you know, I don't think I went on the court giving myself a ton of chances of winning. I think that's changed, for sure.

Obviously he's playing incredible tennis not only this year but this week. But like I said, on the flip side of that, I am playing confident tennis as well myself. And I think if I go out there and play the right tennis and play the right strategy, you know, I think I can give myself a shot, for sure.

Q. You have touched on or spoken about the work you put in on the offseason and also just touched on the mind game, mental aspect of your game. What have you done to improve or develop the mind game for yourself and improve that? Has that been a tough thing to do?

JACK SOCK: Yeah, definitely a tough thing to do or else everybody would be doing it, for sure.

Yeah, I'm not going to give away my exact details of what I'm doing. But, yeah, it's just talking with my team daily, Coach Wolf back home; Troy, who is with me here. The people closest to me in my life, family, friends, and then, tennis-wise, coaches and everything.

Just, you know, everyone collectively as a group, you know, pushing towards a goal, the goals and stuff that I have set for myself and my aspirations as a tennis

player and just making sure that we are always doing the right things, you know, to try to reach those.

And then, you know, at the end of the day, it's me taking responsibility for, you know, what happens, my actions, everything that goes into it. There is only so much time to be out here playing this sport and doing what we love.

Yeah, it's just me taking it day by day and step by step and putting one foot in front of the other and making the right decisions.

Q. Going back to today's match, when you lost the second set, what were you thinking? What did you fix in order to come back in the third set?

JACK SOCK: I was thinking I better win the third or my tournament is over (smiling).

No, I went into the bathroom, you know, tried to regroup a little bit. Obviously I had to use the restroom, but come back out and then just kind of get my energy going again.

Like I said, I think it was a tricky day for both players. Wind was swirling a little bit and conditions were tough.

Yeah, just kind of get my energy back. I think like I showed in the third, I had that positive energy and got my feet going and I'm aggressive. And playing my style of tennis is when my best results happen.

I think I was able to flip the script there in the third and that's why I'm sitting there.

Q. This is obviously an American tournament, a great history of Americans playing well here. Is there any difference for you playing in front of an American crowd like this as opposed to any other tournament?

JACK SOCK: Anytime an American player can speak in front of an American crowd -- I think I can speak for everyone -- it gives you that much more, what, energy, you know, excitement to get out there, for sure. Yeah, it's kind of like the US Open for me.

It's an incredible crowd, the electricity, the atmosphere is insane. I think the fans here are very knowledgeable about tennis and they know the players well. I think they back the Americans very, very well. It's huge for us. We go and play in other countries and they are backing their players an insane amount. It's nice to come here and definitely have that.

Q. You were talking about playing Roger in 2015, but that tournament, if I remember right, seemed like a turning point for you. You won doubles that

year. And you came back from some adversity before that 2015 tournament. Can you talk about that 2015 tournament? Was that some kind of turning point for you?

JACK SOCK: Yeah, it was my first tournament back from pelvic surgery. My brother was with me first time after his near-death experience with his illness. There were definitely a lot of things going on outside of tennis. I think it helped me grow outside of tennis, outside of the tennis court, which has helped me I think in these past few years.

I think that's why my results have trended in the right direction. I have realized, yeah, I love tennis, it's my career, you know, it's my job, and I wouldn't want to be doing anything else.

But since his illness and everything, it's kind of helped me take a step back and realize life is bigger than tennis, for sure. But, no, I think it's helped me enjoy every moment out there, as well. It's helped me, you know, kind of relax on court a little bit.

Q. If you would, could you talk forehands for a minute?

JACK SOCK: Forehands?

Q. Forehands. How does it feel to unleash your forehand, which is so incredible? How did you develop it? Who has the best forehand that you face?

JACK SOCK: Yeah, it feels good to unleash forehands, that's for sure. I feel very comfortable on that side, as everyone knows.

Coach Wolf can probably answer that question better on how I developed that. People have definitely asked me that in the past, and, you know, he was the one that taught me topspin and turning the ball over and the rotation and everything.

But he's also said it was a natural feel for me. He kind of just put the grip in place for me, and then I kind of ran with it and just kind of turned it into what it is today. Definitely grateful for that.

The last part was...

Q. Toughest forehands you face.

JACK SOCK: Probably Rafa's, for sure. Just, I would say, you know, similar to me in a sense, obviously in a lefty version. It's a very heavy ball, tough to face.

But it's different than, you could say, Roger who takes time away like that, and it's a flatter ball, gets through the court a lot better or a lot quicker.

So different forehands out there, but those two are probably up there. But different, for sure.