

BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 18, 2017

Roger Federer

Press Conference



R. FEDERER/J. Sock

6-1, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Looked to me like you played your normal spectacular first set and started living on your second serve in the second set.

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah (smiling). Yeah, it's a good explanation, maybe. I think I definitely played great in the first set. Came out and really saw the ball well. I think Jack didn't have his best first set, but, you know, I found a way to take advantage of that quickly, hardly made any mistakes and was able to press.

The second set was more like what I expected the first set to be, to be quite honest, before the match. It was hard to break and return well off Jack's heavy serve.

Then just maybe see if there was an opening that never really came. I maybe dropped my level just a bit, as well, as he lifted his.

And then in the second set, like you said, I had to rely a lot on my second serve. I'm happy it was there, because I didn't serve particularly well in that second set. Things got a bit more complicated, but it was definitely a good feeling to get through in two sets and to be back in another finals here.

Q. Looking ahead to Stan, what makes him such a good matchup for you, especially on hard courts?

ROGER FEDERER: Well, I'm not sure if it's a good matchup. I mean, I have maybe a good head-to-head and a lot of those matches or a few of those matches come early when I was the overwhelming favorite when I was maybe still world No. 1 and he was 30 in the world and his game was based heavily on the clay courts. Snuck in a lot of victories there maybe in the beginning.

In recent times, I thought we played a lot of close matches, and he was also able to dominate me over a set or two sets, maybe, on the faster courts, maybe Wimbledon, maybe in other places, here as well, indoors as well he's done it.

So I don't see it per se as a huge advantage. I think

he's cleaned up his game really nice on the faster court. He's the reigning US Open champ and back in his first American tournament. He's back playing. It shows that wasn't a surprise, you know, that he won the US Open.

And I think he does a really nice job of, you know, defending and then creating -- going from defense to offense, you know. He's improved his serve. Especially as he goes deeper in the tournament, you know, confidence builds. That's when he's harder to stop.

You know, I have variation. I have an offensive mindset that's in my DNA. And sometimes for a player like Stan, he likes to have a bit more time and I can maybe rush him.

But we'll see if that's possible tomorrow.

Q. Do you already know what will be your schedule on clay? With the ranking, will it change a bit because you're having such a great start of the season that the ranking could be maybe sooner, quicker, as good as you want it to be?

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, no. I don't know what my clay court schedule is until after Miami. That will stay this way regardless of how this tournament goes. And Miami, for the time being, rankings are completely secondary to me.

So if I take a decision after Miami, yeah, it's basically of, you know, looking ahead, how can I remain healthy and how can I keep the fire and the motivation for the tournaments that I will be playing.

What I don't want to do is overplay and just get tired of traveling and tired of just playing tournaments and just entering and, I don't know, just doing people a favor just to be there with no aspirations. That's not why I'm playing.

I want to play, if people see me, that they see the real me and a guy who is so excited that he's there. So that's a promise I made to myself that if I play tournaments that's how my mindset has to be and will be.

So, yeah, we'll see after Miami.

Q. Having said that, rankings follow-up question. Andy Murray is missing Miami.

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, surprised to hear that.

Q. And Novak back in Monte-Carlo. Wonder whether you think you have a shot at being No. 1 by the end of the year?

ROGER FEDERER: Well, because I'm not going to be playing so much, you know, you would think I would need to win probably another Grand Slam for that to happen. Because I have one in the bag, I guess there is a possibility.

You know, plus I'm playing well here again, away from the Grand Slams. But the Grand Slams give so many points that that's probably where I would have to make a huge run again. And maybe one is not enough, as well, because they will pick up their level of play. They will pick up their game, and they're going to win tournaments again.

So, for me, just because Novak might not play Miami and Andy is not, and I'm in the finals here, it doesn't change anything in my scheduling.

Yeah, far away place, yeah, sure, I'd love to be world No. 1 again. But anything else other than world No. 1 for me is not interesting. So that's why the rankings is not a priority right now. It's totally about being healthy, enjoying the tournaments I'm playing and trying to win those.

Q. Obviously you have known Stan for a long, long time. Could you take a minute and go back to the very beginning when you first met him years ago, what your first recollections were?

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, we played -- I remember we practiced in Biel at the National Tennis Center. I had hardly heard of Stan, and they said he's a good junior from Lausanne who is happy to come and hit with you. Sure. Great.

He used to play from really far back. Powerful backhand. I was surprised how easy he was able to hang with me, because I think I might have been world No. 1 already at the time. So we didn't meet until sort of later on, because I think he was staying in Spain, as well. He was doing his own private thing.

So I really had heard very little about him. Didn't see him very much or never. So I was very impressed very quickly.

And then, of course, he came to Davis Cup to the semis with us as a team in 2003 to Melbourne, went there for, like, two weeks. That was a cool time

because we were, like, eight players instead of just four. We took eight along and Stan was one of the guys who could come along. So I got to know Stan more and more through Davis Cup.

Yeah, we always got along very well. You know, I have been mighty impressed how he's made his game grow, because I thought forever he'd be just a clay court guy. But because of the mandatory plays you have to play in the Masters 1000s and all the hard courts and so forth, you actually will never see anymore just a true clay courter. You have to be able to play hard courts, and he showed how it can be done and through hard work what's possible.

I'm his No. 1 fan when it comes to his success and how he's been able to do it, because we work with the same fitness coach for many years now. So I know a lot what's going on in Stan's life and he knows a lot what's going on in mine. We always support one another.

So that was my beginning of Stan, just seeing him evolve and grow. And I was giving him a lot of advice until the time came where basically he needs no more advice, because he's his own man now. He knows what he's doing, which is a great evolution for him.

Q. You began this tournament obviously in one of the most difficult draws in recent memory and now you're through to the finals without dropping a set and, if I'm not mistaken, not even dropping serve. How does it feel to be so efficient here? Have you exceeded even your own expectations?

ROGER FEDERER: Yes, I have (laughter). I feel great. I forgot how tough the draw actually was. I got definitely lucky in the quarters against Kyrgios and not having to play against him because he was clearly playing very well.

Then again, that took care of my section of the draw with Steve Johnson and also especially with Rafa, put myself in the position to be in the quarters and see who comes through on the other section with Delpo and Novak and Nick and Zverev.

Yeah, look, sometimes you get lucky when you put yourself out there. I did. I'm able to keep going today which I'm very happy about. Next thing you know, from looking at that section of the draw as, like, a mountain to climb, next thing you know you're in the finals and flying.

It's very fascinating how quick can things can turn your way if you play well and you believe and you're having a good time.

I'm very pleased, and I hope I can play one more good

match tomorrow.

Q. Tomorrow you will play in the final and you have already won 89 tournaments. I was wondering is there a 100 wins mark or the 109 Connors record anywhere on your radar in terms of your legacy you want to achieve?

ROGER FEDERER: I mean, not really. It's not a goal of mine per se to play until I reach 100 or something like that. Could be. It's a nice goal to have.

But I think I'm still too early, you know, after the comeback. You know, I was just happy to be feeling healthy again at the end of last year. So when I set myself the goals was to play, you know, through Miami and see how I feel, sort of three, four months into the season. So I couldn't think of, you know, reaching 100 titles. I was just happy to be playing another 10 events maybe.

So here I am going strong now, and reached 89, so clearly could reach 90 tomorrow. That could be a huge milestone for me and my team.

But, you know, that stuff can change. Ask me again in three to six months, you know, how I'm feeling, if I won any more or not. Things are going very well right now.

Q. I will.

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah. (Smiling).

Q. I have asked a couple of players about the mental side of the game and if it's born in you or if you can learn it. If there are ever moments when things are going a little bit shaky on the mental side as far as yourself and generally on that topic. What are your thoughts? What would you do? Do you think it's born or you can learn it, the mental strength?

ROGER FEDERER: I mean, I think there is definitely players who it is easier for to play the big stage and playing against the best players. So you have that side.

Then you have the other side, guys who just, for them, practice is super easy. You have those guys.

And then you have the guys who it doesn't matter what tournament it is, what round it is, they just get it done, you know. They have always the same mindset, same intensity. Whereas the other guy who is maybe the big match player, he struggles to play on the outside courts. He might struggle in practice, and he struggles on different continents or in different places or when he's not at home.

I believe everybody is born with some strength.

Where? Only the player knows. And then the rest you have to work at it, because there is always a big percentage that doesn't come naturally, and you have to find your way and find your confidence, if you like.

And you have to make your experience. At the end of the day, you have to, and only then you become a complete player. That's why players need time in the beginning.