

# BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 18, 2017

## Raven Klaasen

## Rajeev Ram

Press Conference

KLAASEN-RAM/Kubot-Melo

6-7, 6-4, 10-8

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Raven, your thoughts. Both of you, nice to win a Masters 1000?**

RAVEN KLAASEN: Yeah, I'll tell you what. When you think of one to win and how to win it, this is about as good as it gets. To play two legends of the game that are still playing, Nadal and Djokovic, and then to go all the way to finish the trophy out is something that I will cherish for a long time.

At the start of week, we had ambitions of playing well. But as the week grew, we got a little bit more confident. We thought that we were playing well enough to win it, but it's still very difficult, specifically this tournament, to go all the way given the amount of good players in the draw.

**Q. Raj, you can't ask for more on a birthday?**

RAJEEV RAM: No, you really can't. We were kind of battling the whole time. It's tough. We had a couple situations last year where we were in big moments and it kind of got away from us, and actually that happened to me a couple more times without Raven.

I lost a singles final in Delray, I lost a gold medal match with Venus, and then we lost the World Tour Finals, then we lost in Miami finals. It was, like, you can't help but think, What do we need to do to get over the hump?

I thought those guys played quite well. I guess what we needed to do was hang in there, and we did that as well as we could today.

**Q. Raven, there has been consistency absolutely. Why do you all mesh so well?**

RAVEN KLAASEN: It's funny, because if you sit through some of the conversations we have behind the scenes, it's not as smooth as what it appears on the court. We are adjusting and learning all the time what the other person can and can't do and figuring ways to add stuff to our repertoire.



I think the fundamental thing is we both are looking to improve all the time. We are not really happy with being where we are. We are looking to get the most out of ourselves.

As long as that hunger and that desire to improve stays there, I think we will all keep getting better and putting ourselves in good position.

**Q. Both of you individually, what does a title as big as this actually mean for the immediate issue and also looking ahead through the year?**

RAJEEV RAM: Well, for the immediate issue, I think obviously everybody's goal, whether singles or doubles, beginning of the year to make it to the ATP World Tour Finals at the end of the year. A title like this definitely puts us in good position to at least try to do that.

I think for the long term, I think it's good validation, you know, for what we're doing. We are trying to improve all the time. And when you see results actually that back up the work you have done, it really makes it motivating to keep going and keep trying to continue to get better.

**Q. Raven?**

RAVEN KLAASEN: Yeah. Personally, it's really nice. I mean, like Raj, we set out with some definite goals at the beginning of the season and this puts us on course to achieving some of those.

I think if we look at our sort of little time spent together as a team, we have won at various different levels and we haven't won at this level yet. We came close in Miami last year.

And to take it to the next level is something that's very satisfying and rewarding given how hard we worked to try and get better at this game.

But I will tell you what's weird about playing tennis is -- we certainly will celebrate and enjoy this tonight, but we are going to get right back to work and figure out how we reproduced that. Because if you look at the best team of all time, they were able to do this for, like, 12 years straight.

It's something to live up to and we look to them a lot to kind of keep that consistent, high level.

**Q. When you look at the strength of the doubles draw at this tournament, to get through that when you've got Rafa, Novak, Stan, Nick Kyrgios, and all these guys playing doubles and to get through that sort of a draw must make it even more special.**

RAJEEV RAM: Yeah, you know, I think Marcelo actually mentioned on the court, I think, 15 of the top 20, I don't know the exact stat, something like that, you mentioned Rafa, Novak, Stan, Nick, and I will add Andy Murray. He was in the draw too.

I think it just goes back to that validation that this is our craft at the moment. This is what we do. You know, to be able to come out of the draw and beat those guys is just all the more validation that we were able to hold up against, you know, both the doubles team of today and a lot of the singles players.

And, you know, one guy we didn't mention before is Sam Querrey. He's gotten us a couple of times in big moments, and we were able to win a match against him and Muller. And it shows us and proves that what we are doing is the right thing and we need to keep on the right track that we are on.

**Q. If I'm correct, Raven, your best result here is second round. And Rajeev, you have had first-round exits.**

RAVEN KLAASEN: Very surprising (smiling).

**Q. What was the difference for you guys coming to the desert and changing your results so drastically and making it all the way to the final?**

RAVEN KLAASEN: I think it's twofold. We have now had about a year and a half, slightly more than that, together as a team. You certainly feel that even though the results don't always go your way, as a unit you're able to perform at a high level more consistently. So I do think as a team we've grown.

For me, personally, we have added some new things with our coach, Billy Heiser, who has given me some new thoughts on how to play in slower conditions, which is one of the things that makes this tournament tough. You know, it's a gritty court that bounces a lot and you play night matches.

For a long time I didn't feel that suited my game style, but now I'm quite comfortable with the conditions being slower, maybe even being advantageous to me, because I'm quite fast on the court, you know. That change in mindset really gives you sort of a belief that you can win matches.

Obviously this week we were fortunate that we were able to sneak out a tough one against Tomic and Nadal. And then tonight being a set and a break down we believed in our structures and it panned out well for us in the end.