

Miami Open presented by Itaú

Friday, March 22, 2019

Novak Djokovic

Press Conference



N. DJOKOVIC/B. Tomic

7-6, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How do you think you handled him today, not being a conventional player?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, exactly, he doesn't give you much rhythm at all. Every ball is different. He can play equally well in the court and far behind the baseline, slows down the pace. He just has a very unconventional shot. Kind of hard to play someone that you can't really predict what's next.

He has this service motion, you really don't know where he's going to go. He can hit his spots really nicely. I thought he served really well. It was really kind of hard for me to read his serve.

You know, second set I played better. Overall it was a solid match.

Q. You didn't have the result you wanted in Indian Wells. Did you feel any more pressure coming into this tournament? You're only as good as your last result, kind of cruel.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: That is partly true.

No, I have not. Of course, everyone has nerves, I guess, coming into a center court, regardless of how much experience you have, how high ranked you are. I mean, you care about it. If you're feeling excited and also a little bit nervy about your performance, it means you care about it.

It's a normal feeling that I commonly have coming into tournaments like this. It was nothing unusual really, except the fact that I was playing obviously on a big stadium for the first time. I've never had this kind of experience, so I thought it was really unique.

It feels like indoor a little bit. It's quite different conditions than from playing on the outside courts where it's quite windy during the day. Center court has literally no sun after 1 p.m. It does feel like an indoor a little bit.

But it's a nice court. They've done a really good job. They have taken I think a very bold step forward in the

right direction, this tournament. For us being part of the Dolphin, Miami Dolphins Stadium, is a treat. Hopefully we can have even more people filling out the stadium in the next days.

Q. Is Bernard a particularly tough guy to play because of his a-rhythmic kind of game?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Exactly. I've had quite a lot of court time between Indian Wells loss singles and now, tonight's match. I've worked on everything I need to work on. Now it's just a matter of time to build the momentum and build that match play.

Q. Opponents often talk about your balance, flexibility, athleticism as being keys for you. Were there any sports you played growing up that you feel helped you or contributed to that besides skiing? How has your training changed post 30?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I think skiing has affected the flexibility of my ankles, my joints. I know a lot of players are forbidden to ski, but I don't have that in my contract. I don't sign a contract that conditions me not to ski.

Skiing, it kind of runs in my veins. I come from a professional skier's family. My dad used to compete. My uncle, my aunts. For us, it's kind of normal to be on the slopes. I grew up on the mountain.

I'd played, of course, a lot of basketball and soccer. Those are very famous sports in our country. Just try to be outdoors. I spend a lot of time outdoors. Nowadays, it has changed with technology and everything. But I think that has helped my development also as a person and a tennis player.

Q. The first match you played at Indian Wells, you played a qualifier. It was a close match. Did you expect a qualifier to be that tough?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: To be honest, I already forgot about it. If you're taking me back to Indian Wells, I wasn't I guess feeling and playing at my best. I was just trying to do what I'm doing also here: build the momentum and get myself going from early rounds.

I had not played five and a half weeks any official match since Australian Open finals, so Indian Wells was for me a big test. Rain interruption, rain delay, playing night and day in Indian Wells, it's quite a

significant difference in terms of conditions.

Yeah, just didn't find a way to beat Kohlschreiber there. It's okay. I had more time to work on my game. Played a fun doubles event with Fognini. That was a lot of fun. Got myself ready for here.

I'll put my whole focus here.

Q. Last year at this time is when your level started to ramp up. After a year, being No. 1 again, where is your confidence at now compared to other times during your career when you were No. 1?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It's really kind of hard to compare. I never liked comparing any seasons and years. I just feel like, you know, we are all evolving. Everything is evolving in life. It's kind of hard to compare.

As I said, I personally don't like that. I try to be present as much as I can. So grateful that I have obviously opportunity to be at the top of the men's game again.

The last 10 to 12 months have been really special. I mean, unlike anything I have experienced before in my career, that's for sure. Considering 12 months ago, the way I was playing, post surgery and everything, to be where I am today is quite phenomenal really.

I'm proud of it. Also would not have done it without the support of the team and family and everyone who was with me there. But I think that injury, the process of getting back to my top level, makes this journey even more special.

Definitely has taught me, showed me things about myself that I've not known before. I had to really dig deep in those moments where I was really doubting everything. It's quite a journey and I'm grateful to go through that experience.