

April 1, 2009

Sony Ericsson Open

N. DJOKOVIC/J. Tsonga

6-3, 6-4

An interview with:

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. In terms of performances recently, where does that one rate given all circumstances and his record against you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, I have to be very happy with today's performance, because I have been struggling to find a way to win against him in the last four encounters.

It was all so close, so I just knew that I need to stick in and, you know, try to wait for my chances and be aggressive. In the last couple of the matches we've played, I was just, for no reason, waiting for him to make the shots or the mistakes.

Today I think I tried to be closer to the line, more in control, and just put the pressure on him. So I think that's what I did. Overall, I'm really satisfied.

Q. How are you feeling? We got an announcement upstairs saying that you had to go into the doctor afterwards. How are you feeling?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, well, I've been not feeling well with the stomach last night and this morning, and probably the heat affected as well, combined of course with the pressure on the court and all these things.

But, look, it's just incredible the way I stood up and tried to survive there on the court. It was really important for me to win in the straight sets and to save those service games, because I was really lucky. I played some good shots.

He made some errors, but I was aggressive when I needed to be, and I was fortunate in the end.

Q. How important was your first break of serve? Because he hadn't lost his serve all tournament.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Uh-huh.

Q. Did you know that?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, yeah. I have no idea. I haven't followed really that much his matches, but I knew that he has a big serve. I knew that it is going to be a key today if I can return a lot of serves back and try to make him play around the baseline. I trying to open up the court on his backhand side and then give myself opportunity to control the points.

So this is what I have done really well. I think I've read his serve quite well. First set he had a very low percentage of the first serves, which gave my more opportunity to attack.

Q. But your consistency off the ground today was extremely high. Is that probably what gave you the most pleasure?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes, I tried to step in. I knew that he loves hitting forehands. He loves returning around his backhand and just hitting those really powerful forehands that can do a lot of damage to opponent.

In the past couple of the matches we have played, it was really close. We played a lot of three-setters. Then he just suddenly, in the third set, you know, wakes up and brings his game to another level and just starts hitting the ball.

But it was, again, my mistake, because I was waiting and just trying to play a solid game from the baseline. But now I tried to step in and take the chances, and it paid off.

Q. You're regularly taking between 30 and 40 seconds between points today. Did the umpire at any point give you a sort of...

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: So you looked at the time?

Q. I looked at the timing, and the supervisor was down on the court apparently as well.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Oh, yeah?

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Q. Did the umpire say anything about it at all?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No.

Q. Was it because you weren't feeling that good?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I don't know, really. I mean, look, I've had time warnings in the past. I'm not saying that I will not have more. If they give me time warning with a reason, if they, you know, let me know that I am slow and everything and then give me warning, I have no problems with it. I will accept it as, you know, something which is rule.

But it's on them, you know. I cannot tell to the umpire, Look, I'm slow. Can you give me a warning. (Laughter.)

Q. Sure. There just appear to be some inconsistencies. Rafa has been called this week for it. The rule is 25 seconds, isn't it?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, look, I think today was very special conditions. If you get on the court and feel the heat and play a two-hour match you would understand why we are a little bit slow.

Q. I noticed you were bouncing the ball a lot again. Two years ago you were joking, and you said that the reason I bounce it so often is because I like to stay on court a little longer. There was then a period you sort of went back to normal bounces, and today I counted like 19 at a certain point.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, yeah, there were certain points I did quite a lot. But, you know, I don't do this on purpose really. This is something you can't explain.

I don't know, ask Rafa why he's taking his panties out of -- you know, this is just something that gets in your habit, and this is what I do, you know.

Q. Two years ago when you won you took off your shirt and you were very exuberant and we saw continuing that year the Djokovic who liked to perform for the crowd. You had your famous impersonations. Do you think you've become more subdued?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I'm less fun now?

BENITO PEREZ: You took it off today, didn't you?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, but I lost my muscles obviously. They didn't like it much.

No, well, look, I don't think my personality is only impersonations, okay? I've done that. I'm glad that in my opinion most of the people liked it.

Look, my point was only to bring up a positive energy and laughs in the people, and that's exactly why I did it. I've been doing it for many years back, you know, not just now when I started having success.

I get more attention obviously with the success. But there were some, well, people and colleagues as well who didn't like what I do, so I just don't want to provoke some negative vibes, if you understand what I'm saying, and just try to do my job on the court.

Q. What things would you say that Tsonga could improve in his game to break through in a big match to the next level?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, he's got more or less all the shots. I mean, he's improved his backhand a lot. His backhand was for some time in the past a weaker point. But it's he's improving. He steps in more on the backhand, so it's better.

But, look, it's all a couple of points here and there. It's not a huge difference, especially in the important matches between the top players. Even today it was 6-3, 6-4, but, again, it was just couple of points that were deciding a winner.

So it's just a mental ability and if you stand up on the right leg.

Q. A few weeks from now Ana and Jelena are going to try to bring Serbia into the World Group with the Fed Cup. Now in this country, people don't pay attention to the Fed Cup. I have a feeling in Serbia people will be taking note. How big a deal would that be, World Group status?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It's a big deal for Fed Cup and Davis Cup. For us, a small country, it's really unexplainable how much success we are getting in this sport in last two, three years. We get a lot of attention back in our country, which is a country of only, you know, eight, nine million people comparing to States and any other bigger countries.

It's very small. But, again, we have a lot of success in the team sports, which we always have a long tradition in. But tennis, never. Serbia is, for the first time, you know, the country of Serbia in the World Group in the Davis Cup, it was last year.

Now we have a chance in the Fed Cup, which I think they deserve to be one of the best teams in the world. I mean, they're two great players.

So on the other side, I'm sure that they will have a lot of support and they going to get to the World Group.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about the two possible matchups in the semifinals, Federer or Roddick?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I've played them both. I played Roddick this year two times on hardcourts. I really played two bad matches. First one retired in the Australian Open, and second played a quite, quite bad match in Indian Wells.

So I really didn't give him a lot of -- you know, give him a lot of, you know, tough time on the court. He won quite easy in Indian Wells, so I have to change some things if I play him. He's a big server. We all know that he loves playing in the States, and this is where he makes his biggest results and impact.

On the other hand, Roger, there's not much to talk about him. He's so consistent on the major events. He's been so dominant the last couple of years. Tough, tough encounter against the both of them.

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