

March 26, 2009

Sony Ericsson Open

An interview with:

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How are you feeling at the moment?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I feel all right. I'm physically quite fit, and mentally, obviously, motivated to do well here, to get far in the tournament. I've won this event two years ago, which is quite important for, you know, upcoming 2009 tournament.

It's quite suitable to my game, the surface, and I feel good, even though I had -- the last match I played in Indian Wells was quite disappointing. It was really one of the worst matches I've played in my career on this surface, so I was not happy with the way I performed.

But, you know, life goes on. I'll try to work hard the next couple of days and make things look right, and hopefully now I can get far.

Q. How would you summarize your first few months of the year for you? Are you happy with it?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, yeah. I'm satisfied. I know it could have been better, and I wish something maybe a little bit more, especially in the major events, towards the end of the event.

But I just didn't perform my best tennis when I needed to, and it's just that -- but, you know, I had some decent results, you know. I played quarterfinals of the Grand Slam, semifinals of Marseilles, and then I won the tournament in Dubai, which was really important for my confidence, that I can really come back on the right path. So this is what I'm trying now.

Q. Can you talk about how close the field is, the world's top players? It's not just No. 1 and everybody else. What's that mean when you go into a tournament?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: It means a lot in the first place for the sport, because I think it's -- it's a wish for all the tennis fans worldwide to see more

variety of the players, that they can win the major events.

So I think that's what's going on in this moment. You have not any more two or three, you have now four, five, six players that they can really go all the way through. So I think it makes it more interesting for the game, for sport, for everybody.

It's a challenge for us players since we have more candidates, more rivalry, and makes you want to improve more.

Q. Did you see the Australian men's final? Did you watch the men's final?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yes. I did some, yes. Not all of it.

Q. You're an expert beyond any commentator. Was there anything about that match that took you by surprise or the aftermath? Or did it go as you thought it would go?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I thought it was quite a great match. They both played really well. You know, Rafa played more patient, I think better tennis in the important moments. It was just a couple points that it was really decided.

I'm thinking the last couple matches they played against each other it was really a couple of points that really decided the winner. So, I mean, they are the two best players in the world for the last four or five years.

Most of the tennis fans, what they expect from them is always to play a fantastic match. So really high level. That's what they did in Australia.

Q. The Roddick match at Indian Wells, you and Andy have a bit of a rivalry, for whatever reason. Is it that he's playing so much better this year with his new coach and new conditioning, or is it a combination that you kind of didn't seem that fired up for the match?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: He's playing better. That's a fact. He's stepping up more in the court, and he's -- you just feel the improvement.

But in that specific -- specifically that match, it wasn't -- it wasn't only him, you know. He

was playing a quite solid, solid match, but he didn't needed to do something extra, because I think I was giving him all the points away. I was just making incredible amount of the unforced errors, and already a break in the first game, you know, gave him a lot of advantage.

So I just wasn't myself that day. But, you know, turn the next page.

Q. Just to take you back to that match in Indian Wells, obviously immediately following it it's difficult for you to understand why you might not have played so well. You've had a chance to reflect now. Do you know why that performance was what it was?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Everything happens for a reason. That day and that match I wouldn't like to remember, of course, but you always try to learn from your mistakes. I didn't do a great job at all. I talked to my coach, and, of course, the team, and tried to figure out the way that I can make some things better.

I don't think it's specifically any shots, forehand, backhand, serve. Just in general, mentally that day I wasn't there. So I think that's what I need to really prove to myself, that I have quality, enough quality that I can be one of the best players in the world. I just need to be confident.

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