

BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, March 12, 2017

Rafael Nadal

Press Conference



R. NADAL/G. Pella

6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How do you feel you played today?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yes, was a solid match, no? Was a match of the first round that I didn't try to do amazing things. I tried to play solid. I tried to find the rhythm, and I think I did. For moments I played well; for moments I played a little bit less well. Important thing, I won, and I won in straight sets. I had some good feelings for a lot of moments.

In general terms, I think I played a solid match.

Q. On a day like today, we like to call this a dry heat. Pretty hot out there. How did you feel in the dry heat?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, I adapt myself better to the dry heat than to the humid heat.

I think it's easier for the players to resist that conditions than when it's very, very humid.

But it's true that today was hot, and there was a lot of sun out there. Very, very warm. Was difficult to control the ball. The ball was flying a lot.

Q. You were clearly going for more on your serves today with mixed success. How do you feel about that? Is it challenging to keep going for more in a match when maybe you know you're going to perhaps double fault or have more second serves?

RAFAEL NADAL: Seriously, I am not having more double faults when I'm going for more. Sometimes I have more double faults when I'm playing more conservative.

I tried to serve, to increase a little bit the speed of the serve when the match was coming. In the beginning, tried to serve a little bit more safe.

Generally, I'm happy with the way I'm serving this year. I will be more happy today if I had some more free points that I need -- I need to take few more. Was not enough today, free points with my serve, and that's it.

Q. Just curious as to your thoughts about Andy Murray being upset last night.

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, that's the sport, no? Sometimes you win; sometimes you lose. Yesterday probably Andy didn't play his best match, and Vasek served very well. So then you arrive -- you go to a tiebreak, and anything can happen.

Yeah. Andy just came here winning in Dubai, so probably he will be playing very well in Miami, no?

It's true that in Indian Wells during his career he had some bad matches maybe, and so happens sometimes. Sometimes you don't feel comfortable in one event, and it's difficult to overcome that. Happened for me a lot of times for me in Cincinnati, and I was not able to find the rhythm, and finally I won once.

But when you have bad feelings in one event, sometimes it's difficult to overcome that.

Q. To your credit, you have come out calling for many changes in the sport: Surface, scheduling, time between points, drug testing, Davis Cup. But if you could choose one change to make in the sport, what would that change be?

RAFAEL NADAL: I don't know. I am just a player. My feeling is we need to move the sport the way that the people want it, and I don't know which is that way. But the most important thing for our sport is to change our sport to the way that is more attractive for the people, for the fans.

That's my feeling. It's obvious that every time people are taller, every time people have more power, serve is going faster, points are shorter, I'm not sure if that's the way that we need to move our sport.

So we need to find a way to manage, keep having a good show and keep having emotions. And people gets emotional when the matches are becoming more dramatic, and people don't remember a lot of matches just with serves and aces. People remember matches with long points, rallies.

And for sure you can have aces, and that's part of the sport and it's nice, the ace and the good serves, too, no? But cannot be that easy.

Q. And after long, wonderful points, you still think the chair umpire should be able to give the players more time between points?

RAFAEL NADAL: I think there is good umpires out there that they are doing. It's not the same when you play in that conditions, very warm and very humid conditions, and when you play with cold conditions. That's for sure not the same, because not the same time to recover. Is not the same when you are playing a point that you serve and you hit winner and when you play a 15-balls rally or 30-balls rally.

So there is good umpires out there that they are able to understand that very well, and they are making a great job. There is others that they don't care, and they look at the watch and, in my opinion, are not looking for the good of sport, no?

Q. Your thoughts on the state of the men's game, the strength of the men's games right now maybe as opposed to two years, five years ago. Seems like on any given match anybody can win. We have already seen it here a couple of times. Just the strength of the game from the young players to, you know, the top four, five players in the world.

RAFAEL NADAL: What do you mean?

Q. Just talking about the strength of the game now, how strong it is, and what makes the game so good right now, any players can win on any given day. How good is the game right now?

RAFAEL NADAL: Is always difficult, you know, what happened. And I said a couple of times is what happened that we were able to be in the final rounds, you know, almost every event, something that is gonna be very difficult to repeat.

And happened during a long period of time and will not happen again, in my opinion, in the short term, because there is some very good players out there that -- there is players with huge serve. When you play and you face players that are able to serve that well, then the match is decides in just few balls. So you cannot be -- you cannot have success all the time in these just few balls. So you don't have margin to control the match.

In clay, maybe can be still, still can be a little bit different, no? I think the better players, if they are playing well, may still have advantage. But there is a new generation out there. There is all generation that still plays well and new generation that are coming with a lot of power. So is interesting moment of our sport, in my opinion.

Q. How do you see your form since Melbourne?

How did it evolve? Are you satisfied with where you are standing and...

RAFAEL NADAL: Satisfied from the beginning of the season since the first match of the year in Abu Dhabi. Well, I didn't play no one very bad match during the whole season. I played some great matches.

In Melbourne, I played some great matches. In Acapulco, I played well. In Brisbane, I played well. Let's see here. In Abu Dhabi, I played great. Abu Dhabi, first event, Brisbane, Melbourne, Acapulco, four events already.

But during the four events that I played, I played at very high level. Very happy the way I started the season. Now here is another opportunity. I know I have a very tough draw, and let's see. I don't know. Verdasco or Herbert? Let's see. Gonna be tough one.

Q. A moment ago you were talking about players getting bigger and taller and stronger and aces, and I'm wondering if you have thought at all, like, what kind of changes or limits you might imagine in tennis one day. Are you talking about maybe limits on racquets and string technology or changing the lines on the court, something like that?

RAFAEL NADAL: I don't know. But for me is difficult to talk about that, because when I am talking about that, people can think it's because that helps me.

But I am talking here about the sport overall, no? No, no, not about my generation, because with these conditions I had lot of success. If you ask me, I don't want changes (smiling). I am very happy with this format, because I am having a lot of success with this format, no?

But is true that looking forward, you know, looking five, ten years in front, you see every time the people is taller. Every time people have the chance to serve faster, and if we want to maintain, I think, good points, if we want to maintain a good show for the people, it's something we need to do, no?

We need to start from the younger generations. So you need to put at that line and say in seven years that's gonna change. We cannot change things like this.

So let's work on this, if it's possible, but I am not -- I am no one to say which change gonna be good. Just looking a little bit around, you see that tennis will need changes, you know. The net is still at the same altitude. People are not the same. People are much more taller now than 50 years ago. So it's obvious that we're gonna need some changes in not a very long

period of time.