

BNP Paribas Open

Friday, March 10, 2017

Rafael Nadal

Press Conference



An interview with:

RAFAEL NADAL

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I don't know if you know, they are trying to change ATP 1000 for hard court. How do you stand about it in Rio?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, Rio is a great event, no? Rio on clay, not on hard court, no? We can't change more tournaments to hard. We have enough tournaments on hard.

Clay is part of the history of our sport, so we need to hold tournaments on clay and at the same time is the history of Latin America is more on clay than hard, so we need to preserve that, too.

And I believe that to be 1000 today is not easy. In 2019, I don't know what will happen, but my feeling is we need to change a little bit the schedule. The weather conditions on that part of the season to fly a tournament there in Rio are too extreme, my opinion. We need to fix more that than other thing.

Q. Two of the most memorable matches of recent time were your 2008 win over Roger at Wimbledon and the Australian match. We have all had wonderful things that are in our grasp, but they get away. What are your reflections on the Australian final? What are your takeaway thoughts on that?

RAFAEL NADAL: We talked enough. I almost don't forget about it.

It was a great moment, I think, for the promotion of our sport. It was, for sure, important because was, you know, a lot of expectation about this match. For me, personally, to be part of it was great again. For sure I want to win, but overall I felt happy to be back on a big match like this.

Against Roger, too. So was a moment that we will remember. I think is something that gonna be part of the history of our sport. I enjoyed the match, and I think the fans, too. So was a great moment.

Q. I just want to talk about your doubles partnership with Bernie. How did it come about?

He plays a different style than you do. Has been some talk about the way he plays. Can you just talk about how the doubles tournament came about for the tournament?

RAFAEL NADAL: I don't know. I play doubles for fun and for practice a little bit, too, no? Before the singles start.

I supposed to play with Bernard in Brisbane. That will make sense, because his house. And for me was something that I like the idea.

Then I said to him that I could not play there because I had to play with Marc Lopez to prepare the Davis Cup, but Marc Lopez four days or two days before the tournament start decide not to go. So was late to play with him.

I said with him, that's what happened. I have to play with Marc. And if we can change Brisbane for Indian Wells, will be great for me. That's it. No, no, nothing else.

Q. Were you surprised by Toni's decision after Melbourne that he will stop traveling with you after the end of that season?

RAFAEL NADAL: Surprised? Well, I talked enough about that, too, no? Toni is free to do whatever he wants. I just can say thanks to him for everything that he did. And I have an academy that he's working there, too. So for me is such an important person in the academy.

So for me the important thing is he's happy doing what he's doing. I understand that he has three kids, too, two kids and playing tennis, too. Probably he has the motivation to practice with them.

For me personally, more than my coach, he's for sure my uncle before. So I always wanted the best for him, and I'm sure that he wanted the best for me. So we always had an amazing, good relationship, and that's not gonna change.

I feel happy if he's happy doing what he's doing. That's the most important thing for me, no? The same than the rest of the people of my family that I love, no? So I want the best for them. And if Toni take that position, it's because he feels that is the best for him at this

moment, and maybe he thinks it's the best for me. I don't know (smiling).

But he took the position. And as I said before, for me, everything, he's free to do whatever. No, I am fine with everything.

Q. I just wanted to ask you a little bit about the recent Davis Cup changes being proposed, moving from best of five to best of three and to two days. Secondly, I know we get a lot of player complaints about Davis Cup, but if you got, say, a million dollars a tie, would you play the competition as it is?

RAFAEL NADAL: If you make what?

Q. If you got, like, a million dollars a tie for playing Davis Cup, would the top players play the competition as it is now? And, if not, what amount would it take?

RAFAEL NADAL: I never talk about money on the press. That's not gonna be my first time. No, no.

ITF need to make changes I said a lot of years ago. And still now there is a new president and new staff that they are trying to make new things, and that's always good.

I don't know what changes, but all the things that they can try will be positive, but in my opinion is not about best of three or best of five. In my opinion, is about we cannot have a Davis Cup champion every year, no? That devalue the competition.

I cannot say what I really believe that will be good, but the real thing is if the top players are not playing very, very often, then you are making something not good. So you need to change, but I advised that long time ago. But, you know, the old stuff of the ITF always thinks on the small picture.

And at the end of the year, always there is a winner with the top player and that's good for the picture. And if we think about the real competition, Davis Cup is a beautiful competition, is a very emotional competition. And to have and to maintain that level of emotion, that level of quality of tennis, you need to do the things for the best players. And the best players need to feel comfortable playing every time that Davis Cup is going, no?

More than best of three or best of five, it's about changing the, in my opinion, one winner every three years. I don't mean one year Davis Cup, one year no Davis Cup. I mean, for example, two ties per year. That will be something reasonable and players will be very motivated to play Davis Cup.

But happened to us. We won, like, four times, you know, in eight years. So, you know, you finish Davis Cup, last tournament of the year, December, and then in January you start again.

And it's tough, because, you know, I talk personally for my body, you know, you have drastic change from -- you can play on any surface and you're coming from different surfaces. Even if it's great to have that week with the rest of the players and the rest of the staff, I have great relationship with your country, with my country, with all the people who works there, but still a big risk for me.

That's something that I try to make every time that I could, but last couple of times I was injured.

Q. Following up on that about Davis Cup, speaking for Serbia, we'll miss having you in Belgrade. It will be great to have you there. But Spanish team is so deep they can obviously do very well, you know, even in your absence. I'm curious what you think about sort of team play versus star players play. We won't get a Big 4 matchup but still should be a very good team competition? Yes, no?

RAFAEL NADAL: Where? There? That confrontation?

Q. Yeah. Serbia/Spain.

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, will be a good tie, good confrontation. I cannot say if I will be there or not, but it's obvious that the moment of the season is not a good one for me, because I need to prepare myself for clay, and I don't want to -- if I play there, then I will have to push my body to the limit during only one week of preparation to prepare one of the most important events for me of the year, like Monte-Carlo. And I had enough injuries in my life to not be conservative in these cases.

But I don't know what's going on. But Serbia have a great team, and we have a great team. It will be a good one. It's true that playing at home with Novak, Serbia is favorite.

Q. Back to your Uncle Toni, what's the most important thing he brought to your development both as a tennis player and as a person?

RAFAEL NADAL: You know, well, first thing, I played tennis because of him. If not, would never play tennis. Will play football. That's what I was doing when I was a kid, too.

I practiced with him, only with him, until I have 12 years old. A lot of part, big part of my success is because of his help. And like a person, it's always when you spend a lot of hours with one person and it's part of

your family have an impact in your personality or in your education.

But at the same time, I have a father and mother, you know, (smiling). I feel that when you are a kid, you can imagine I spend more time with my father and my mother than my uncle, no? They are a very important part of my education, too, and my personality, no?

But it's obvious that Toni had a big impact in all of the things that happened to me in terms of education and in terms of tennis, too.

Q. I was wondering if you saw the match between Paris Saint-Germain and Barcelona?

RAFAEL NADAL: Sorry?

Q. Did you see the match between Paris Saint-Germain and Barcelona?

RAFAEL NADAL: Obviously.

Q. And what did you think?

RAFAEL NADAL: Is something that's going to be part of the history, and I just can congratulate Barcelona for amazing achievement. And I feel sorry for Paris, but I have some good friends there, like the president, Nasser, that I feel so sorry for him, because losing a tie like this is one of the toughest things in the world of sport. So I imagine how tough it is.

But at the end of the day, when the Spanish team is through in the quarterfinals, so already two in the quarterfinals and possibility of four in the quarterfinals from the Spanish league. So that's always great news.

Q. Just wondering how you're feeling coming into this tournament and your thoughts in looking at the draw and how things might progress from there.

RAFAEL NADAL: Oh, it was -- I was a little bit sick two days, so I couldn't practice for two days. I start to practicing yesterday for the first time. Today, I practiced again and today I have doubles.

But is obvious that when you get sick you lose a little bit of the power for a couple of days. So I hope to recover myself good and feel myself ready to compete at the highest level possible. I know I am playing with Guillermo Garcia or Guido Pella first round, and that's all what I can say now. If the things go well, we will have time to talk about the draw.