

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Roger Federer

Press Conference



R. FEDERER/D. Shapovalov

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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Yesterday you said that at the beginning of your career it was hard to train. What decision do you regret from your career, or what will you change of all the decisions that have you made around your career?

ROGER FEDERER: I think the mistakes I did had to be made, you know, for learning experience. I really think I was extremely lucky to have the right people at the right time every step of the way. Because in the beginning, you know, your parents choose for you. Later the Federation chooses for you maybe who is around you. To some extent, of course, you can have some say or your parents have some say, so I was lucky there.

And same with the fitness coaches. I met Pierre already when I was 14. So he had an idea of who I was and what my strengths and weaknesses were, et cetera.

And then, you know, I made so many mistakes maybe by playing certain tournaments and losing instead of maybe not playing, but these are little mistakes. In hindsight maybe a good thing I did them, because I guess you don't do them second time around.

The important thing is to learn from them and not keep doing them. I think I did pretty well there. But I also had good people around me who always wanted the best for me. I think that's great when you have that.

The key is just to be able to know who is there really for you and who is not. At the beginning of the career is difficult, just because when you're rising, like the young guys now you see, all of a sudden you have guys jumping on the train and you don't know why they're there. All of a sudden they happen to be friends, you know.

You just have to figure it out who is going to be part of the core team and who not. That's tough when you're young.

Q. You said that you always enjoy playing people

that you never played before. This was a new matchup for you. How was it out there?

ROGER FEDERER: Well, this is different because he's so young. It's not like I have had a million chances to play him and then it finally happened after years.

So, you know, this is a common thing to happen when you're playing a young guy. It's more playing a young guy than a guy you have never played against.

I enjoyed it. I think I played very well. I had to. Because I think when you let Denis play, he's got some serious power and he gets rhythm going. He can really put you in uncomfortable situations.

So I think I did well, and I'm very happy how I played. Yeah, I thought it was a good match. It was a good level.

Q. You said after the match you like watching big servers play. Tomorrow you have a guy who has won nine tiebreakers, straight sets, so far. You have played him before. Just talk about what it's like out there for you where you have a guy like that where you're not really doing that much rallying and running around. How different is that for you? Do you like it? Not like it?

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, I don't mind it. I enjoy the challenge, because believe it or not, maybe rallies are actually longer than you think sometimes. Because what happens sometimes on your own service games is you don't go so big right away, because you have a bit of time to maybe outmaneuver him, as well, so all of a sudden you extend the rallies on your own service games. Sometimes you do it to maybe take his legs out, as well.

So it's not a bad thing to get some rallies going. Obviously he's always going to try to shorten them. But what I like about it is just to see the sheer power and accuracy that big guys have on their serve, you know. Take the top five guys on the tour right now. I just enjoy watching them to see how many times can they clock service winners? How many times can they serve their way out of trouble?

I think it's more funny than a guy rallying, and then, at the end after a 25-shot rally, somehow winning the point. I think it's more funny if he hits the spot every

time, but the guy looks on the other side, Man, what can I do? Nothing. You know, I think that's better. So I just -- I have a lot of patience to watch those guys. So I appreciate the big servers.

Q. At this point of your career, you're a leader in Grand Slam wins and been No. 1 so many times, but at this point, your age now, is it more important to you to win tournaments or achieve No. 1 in the world again?

ROGER FEDERER: Winning tournaments, because World No. 1 is going to be very difficult. For that I need almost three slams at this level, right now, in the same calendar year. That's just going to be very difficult. I think it's not reasonable to think that way at 37.

So I think it was one of my favorite moments in my life last year in Rotterdam when I was able to get back to World No. 1 at 36, having won the Australian and Wimbledon, that being in the same year, and winning the Sunshine Double and all that stuff. It just aligned itself beautifully. And then in Rotterdam and then again in Stuttgart. Those were special times for me.

World No. 1 is so far away, and Novak just won three slams. I think it would be a bit of a joke if I said that was my goal.

Q. Maybe when young players like Denis plays against you, they have a mindset of nothing to lose. So when you play against that kind of player, is any specific things you are cautious and you needed to take care of?

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah. I mean, I do believe that maybe in a semis, to some extent, there is also something to lose for Denis. It's not like a first or second round where you can free swing and the attention is not quite there yet.

People are expecting something from Felix or Denis in the later stages of the tournaments. They are facing the press. You know, there is not that many stories sometimes left in the tournament. So naturally they have to come here and explain themselves, and that puts the pressure on, you know. But in the first few rounds, there are just so many stories going on that you almost just feel, bang, all of a sudden you've got the top guy.

But then, I mean, for the most part, yeah, I do believe sometimes free swing is a beautiful feeling and that's what the young guys should enjoy to some extent while it lasts, because they will play many matches where all of a sudden they will not be the underdog anymore. But then they will be better players in the process.

So, for me, of course it's always a fine balance

between giving them a chance to miss, but also, at the same time, making the plays and understanding the scoreline I think is very important for me against young guys. Not overplaying, not underplaying. It's a fine line, but I think I did very well tonight.

Q. You feel comfortable, feel great on court. What do you feel or what do you think when some of your partners, Rafa Nadal, Andy Murray, Juan Martin Del Potro, is off the court now?

ROGER FEDERER: What I feel is that I wish them the best, but it's part of the game. You know, I can't play them all. We have so many highlights. There is no substitute for us. If we are not feeling well, we can't play. So we just have to wait it out.

But the good thing about the ATP Tour is you can always come back, because the tour goes from January to November, and you have 15-plus years on the tour. So regardless of their injuries, you know, they will come back, and I hope when they do come back they will be very strong like the last few times.

With Andy in particular now, you know, with the uncertainty about his hip, I just really wish him the very best. With Juan Martin, I think he will find a way back which I'm confident he will. And Rafa is already practicing on the clay. So that was just disappointing that the match didn't happen in Indian Wells, but, you know, it's definitely a better tour with them, but there is also exciting stories when they're not around fortunately for the tour, unfortunately for them.

But I still think they all will be back this year at some point, hopefully, and the year-end hopefully will be incredibly exciting.

Q. How can you anticipate John's serve, if you can, other than when he's hitting aces? Are you able to read it? Are you thinking of reading it out there? Do you do guesswork? What's it like handling that?

ROGER FEDERER: Huh, I don't know. It's a tricky one. Sometimes you go with momentum. Sometimes you go with feel. Sometimes you guess maybe a little bit and sometimes you see it. It's a combination of all sort of things.

And then some days you feel it better than others. And just because -- let's just say I know he's going to be T, let's say he told me that before the serve, that still doesn't mean I'm going to hit a return winner, because the margins are so slim when it comes in so fast and so high.

No. 1, you want to connect. Secondly you want to get in a neutral position, which is very difficult, because

you know he's looking for his forehand or he looks to come in or try to take charge of the point. Yeah, it's tough. Then you just hope that sort of the stars align, that you pick the right side, that he picks the wrong side, that maybe he misses a serve, that you can put him in uncomfortable situations time and time again, and at the end somehow you find a way.

Yeah. He's definitely got one of the serves you can basically not read. It's that simple.