

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

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## Casper Ruud

Press Conference



C. RUUD/F. Cerundolo

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THE MODERATOR: Casper has had a very big week. In the quarterfinals he beat Alexander Zverev, biggest win of his career. Today he wins the semifinal here in Miami to reach his tenth ATP Tour final, Sunday playing his first ATP Masters 1000 final.

Questions?

**Q. Did you ever think your first Masters final would be on a hard court? Was that like a clay court match for a while out there?**

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I mean, I didn't expect if I ever made a Masters 1000 final it would be here in Miami, but I'll take it. Obviously I'm enjoying the conditions and how the court is playing and everything. It's very, very slow compared to other hard courts, so I think it suits my game quite well.

**Q. Do you feel like your experience last year, a breakthrough season, five titles, many quarters and semis of Masters, did you feel that helped you today, especially in the first set when he was serving 4-5 and a couple of breakpoints in the second set?**

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I think I had a little bit more experience than him when it came to the big points, and especially this match. This was his first semifinal of a 1000, and I have been there a couple of times before. But still, every match is important and you can get nervous and tight.

It was a little bit of a shaky start, but I got going quite well and won some key points. Especially in the end of the first I stole the set a little bit. The second set, it was some tough physical games in the beginning.

After that, everything went pretty much my way, so it was a match that was a little bit up-and-down but ended on a good note.

**Q. Looking ahead to the final, you haven't played Hubert. You have played Carlos, so I will just ask you about Carlos. What do you take from him about your match last year? I think it was Marbella? It was clay courts also. What's the chatter in the locker room about Carlos at the moment?**

CASPER RUUD: Well, I think we all can see like how talented he is, that he has a very good I think mind for tennis. He understands the game very well. He knows when to hit certain shots and when, you know, probably not to.

But he is, at his highest level, very, very good, but he also plays high risk, I think, so he goes for the shots quite often. Hopefully if I play him he will miss a couple of those.

I played him last year. I think he played a very good match. You know, I barely had any chance at all, I felt like, so I would try to seek revenge of course. He was just coming out firing flames at me. If I play him I will try to use that and think I would like to get some revenge.

Obviously I think we all know how great of a player he already is and how we will see him around for many years. I think that's the chatter, if that's what you're wondering about (smiling).

**Q. You must be one of the only players on tour to have one Instagram account for yourself and one for your golf as well. When you were growing up, was it Masters golf, was it Masters tennis you were thinking of?**

CASPER RUUD: I have always watched The Masters in golf, and obviously it's coming up next week and I can't wait for it to watch on TV again. It's fun, because I will probably be here in the country while it's ongoing, in Houston next week at the tournament.

Yeah, they show it all over TV, so it's a perfect place to watch The Masters. What I said earlier about watching the finals on TV was mostly tennis, because we have nine of them. Nine weekends you can watch Masters 1000 finals on TV.



But I enjoy watching both sports, and I try to watch a lot of golf, especially here in the States. You have your own Golf Channel, so it's easy to watch the tournaments. It's building up to be I think hopefully a good Masters next week.

**Q. Did you ever have a round with Rafa Nadal before?**

CASPER RUUD: Yes, I have. Played with him a couple of times in Mallorca. He's a very good golfer, and...

**Q. Did you win?**

CASPER RUUD: No, I didn't win (smiling). He beat me there as well.

He's a very, very tough competitor. Honestly, like, a bit tough to play with, because he doesn't say much because he's so focused. Usually on the golf course you are laughing a little bit and joking around. With him, it's no jokes (smiling). Yeah.

**Q. You told me in one of the Mixed Zones earlier about the relationship you have with Florida because you used to come during winter just to cut it short because your grandfather had a place. When you used to come, what did you used to play? Did you ever think about playing the Miami Open? And, well, now you're in the final.**

CASPER RUUD: Well, like I also said, it was during wintertime so we used to come over in November, practice a little bit and play Eddie Herr and Orange Bowl, those two tournaments.

I was never able to do too well unfortunately, but I always enjoyed those junior tournaments and was pretty much like World Cup for tennis in junior tournaments to play the Orange Bowl and try to win it of course, but I was never able to do so.

Then we just stayed over Christmas, because obviously we had, my grandparents, had a vacation house, we were able to stay there. Couple of years I tried to play even some futures down there in January in the Miami area. So I was still fairly young, but I haven't been here too much like the past five, six years, because there are other places you are as a tennis player when you play on the tour in those months.

But I always enjoy coming back here. I think one of my favorite things to have for lunch is a Publix sandwich. I had a couple of them already this visit here to Miami.

**Q. Where was the house?**

CASPER RUUD: Where? It was in Tampa, so a little bit north of here.

**Q. Last September when we spoke at Laver Cup, you had the run with the clay court event and then there was San Diego as well with the hard court, and now the run that you have had here. What do you think maybe clicked to make you feel more comfortable on hard courts?**

CASPER RUUD: I think last year, when I reached the fourth round of Australian Open kind of gave me like a confidence boost on the surface, because I never felt like too bad on the surface playing on hard court, but it's just that my game seems to suit the clay a little bit better. My biggest results were on clay up until, you know, last year. I think they still are. But here I have now a final.

So things changed a little bit now, but that gave me some confidence. And then I think I reached, was it three more quarterfinals I think in the 1000s on hard court last year, so that also gave me like good confidence and experience to feel like, Okay, this is something I can do more often.

Obviously the Nitto Finals was kind of what topped everything when I reached the semis. That was a big result. Even though now coming into hard court tournaments, I think my mindset is a little bit different. Obviously it helps being seeded high in the tournaments. You can get a bye in the first round, and if you get a couple of good wins you're already in the quarterfinals.

Things have changed obviously a lot, but also last year helped a lot for my hard court confidence.

**Q. So there is hard court and there is clay. What about the grass? Do you think it's for cows?**

CASPER RUUD: I think grass is for golf players. My preparation for Wimbledon is pretty much just playing golf, you know, before the tournament, because I feel more comfortable on the golf course than the tennis courts on grass for now. But let's see if it can change.

I mean, I try to take it obviously serious, because I think if you ask people around the world like if they know about a Grand Slam, I think the majority would say Wimbledon because it has such a, you know, big reputation around the world. And I know a lot of players would probably pick Wimbledon if they had to choose one Grand Slam to win.

I obviously see that with all the tradition and it's really fun to be there, but I just haven't felt comfortable. I think it's the ball that makes it a little bit tough for me, because I just

haven't been able to feel it well in my strings yet.

So that's a little bit of an issue for me so far, but I will keep trying and play maybe a couple of other grass court events this year to try to be ready for Wimbledon. The plan is to play Queen's this year and see if I can get into the London grass court spirit.

**Q. You're 23 years old, right around the same age as Stefanos and Sascha and Daniil, who have gotten so much attention the last few years. Do you think that people should be speaking about you in the same breath, given what you've accomplished and in terms of people who are going to be, supposed to be taking over the game the next five, seven years?**

CASPER RUUD: Well, I think those three guys that you mentioned have done better results than myself. I can honestly say that and admit that they have obviously achieved more. Just look at the facts, you will see that.

But I have been able to now beat two of them, and I've played Daniil a couple of times. Those times he's just been too good for me.

But, I mean, it's players we will see around for hopefully, you know, 10, 15 more years, and hopefully myself I can be a part of that group. If people are talking about me or not, doesn't really matter.

I think it could be that I'm still from a small country. Norway is not really like big on the tennis map worldwide. Maybe if, you know, if I could do even bigger results maybe that's a little bit different.

I think also that I haven't been able to do too well in the Grand Slams yet. This may be also reason why that's where the most attention is worldwide. Hopefully I can get some good results in Grand Slams, and yeah, more people can know about a tennis player from Norway.

**Q. (Question about playing Rafa.)**

CASPER RUUD: I played him I think 2020, yeah, and 2021.

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