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Casper Ruud

Press Conference



C. ALCARAZ/C. Ruud

7-5, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Casper, why don't you start off by summarizing your two weeks, what an experience it was reaching your first Masters 1000 final.

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, well, it's been an exciting two weeks here in Miami. I have been here actually for like almost three because I got here quite early from Indian Wells. I got a good practice week in before the tournament started. Even since the first day I have been feeling the courts well and enjoying the environment and the conditions.

So, you know, on the results side I'm very happy with my result here in Miami. Of course disappointing that I couldn't go all the way, but I didn't expect myself to reach the final in the first place, so I can't be too upset about it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. It's been an incredible achievement on your part. As you said, there is a bit of disappointment, as you would expect. You got off to such a great start. What do you think changed things? Was it Alcaraz really lifting? Did you lose a little bit of concentration? Or what happened at 3-Love, 4-1?

CASPER RUUD: I think he lifted his level a little bit. In the beginning he did some sloppy mistakes that we don't see too often from him. I got an early break, a little bit not a cheap break because I made some good points, but he did some mistakes that he doesn't always do.

I started off great. I was feeling good. I was getting on court confident that I would have a good start, and I did. So everything went well in the beginning and then he raised his level.

I didn't serve as well as I needed to today. Unfortunately I was too low on the first-serve percentage, and that's dangerous against Alcaraz, because he returns well both first and second serves, but on the second serves he stays

very, very aggressive and makes a lot of good returns.

I think that kind of also changed a little bit and made it tough for me to serve out the set or keep my service and keep holding my serve and keeping the lead in the first set.

Q. What was your game plan? Seemed like you came out, you were really hitting the ball hard. Were you thinking, I'm going to take the fight to him and go toe to toe with someone who people talk about as being just one of the hardest hitters ever to play?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, a little bit. That was one of the game plans that, you know, like I said before the match, I said in our previous match, you know, he was coming at me almost firing flames at me, so the idea was to try to fight fire with fire, if I can say it that way, and come out and, you know, make him a little bit uncomfortable with how hard I would be hitting the ball, because then he wouldn't have time to set up his shots.

I started very well and hit some good winners, big winners and some big forehands, that was the idea. In the end, of course, when you take those risks there will be mistakes, and unfortunately I couldn't keep that same level up all the match.

But he's a great mover and he gets a lot of balls back, which can be frustrating for any player when you play against him because he moves so well. You feel like you have hit a winner and he's already there and you need to hit like three or four when maybe usually you need to hit one or two.

That's part of his game that is really impressive.

Q. Congratulations for your whole tournament here.

CASPER RUUD: Thank you.

Q. You played him before. Can you talk about what's different? What's evolved in his game? How is he different now, just being on the court today versus last time.

CASPER RUUD: I think he plays quite similar to what he



did when we played last year in Marbella. It was pretty much almost a year ago, and of course he has improved.

But I feel like I also have improved since that match, so it was I felt sometimes similar as I did last year, but I think he has been or physically he has grown a little bit, I think he has put on some more muscle since last year, but even last year he was ripping the ball very hard.

Even though he didn't have like a major like outbreak in springtime last year, I think we all could predict that he would have a good season. This year has been impeccable one so far for him. So, I mean, he's one to look out for, and we will see him, like I said in the speech on court, I think we will see him on the big stage for many years and lifting trophies for many years to come.

Q. What stands out to you in terms of maybe some things you see that he's improved dramatically on, especially on the surface that he played on today?

CASPER RUUD: Well, now, I mean, he's young, so I haven't seen him like as much as I have seen other players, but he plays very aggressive. But at the same time, he doesn't mind like moving and grinding out balls or points if he needs to.

So I think he's one of the players I played who moves better than pretty much anyone. I think I have also played a couple of practice sets with Monfils, and he is always running very well. I think those two players are one of the guys who are moving the best on court. Also have Alex de Minaur, and these guys are very quick with their feet. He has kind of that very quick feet movement but also very much or a lot of firepower in his groundstrokes.

And he serves not incredible but heavy and good enough, and he can mix it up well, going out wide, he goes kick serve sometimes on the first serve.

I think, yeah, I have seen Rafa talk about him, saying that he has all the ingredients to make a good salad, and I think that describes it very well (smiling).

Q. You are scheduled to play next week in Houston. Are you actually going to play over there? How did you decide to go to Houston and play before you come to Miami?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I mean, the decision was made quite long time ago, last year even before the season started. So I had great memories from Houston in 2019, and I always wish to come back.

Now for two years they weren't able to have the

tournament, so I signed up for it. I'm not sure yet if I'm going to go or not. It's not something I have shared to the media, but the last two, three days I have struggled a little bit with a wisdom tooth which has been bothering me quite a while, so it's tough to actually swallow and eat enough.

So I'm not making any excuses for today's match, but it's bothering me quite a lot. So I think I have to check it out before I make a decision. Hopefully it's not too bad, but I just hope I don't need to pull it out because I heard it's so painful (smiling).

Q. No, you don't feel anything anymore. Don't worry.

CASPER RUUD: With the tooth? No, I still feel it, unfortunately.

Q. I mean if they take it out.

CASPER RUUD: Oh, I don't feel anymore. Okay. Yeah, so maybe it's the best thing to take it out, but I hope I don't need to.

Q. I understand. Not just yet. You said when giving your speech how nice Carlos was, and he gave the same compliment to you. What inspired you to say something like that?

CASPER RUUD: Well, I mean, he's just a nice guy. I don't know him too well personally, but he's one of the younger guys. I remember myself when I was one of the younger guys coming into the tour, you were a bit maybe like afraid and you don't know too many people.

Obviously his name has grown a lot in the past year. So I think everyone has got to know him a little bit. But I always found it a little bit like challenging the first tournaments you're on tour, so it's always -- I think it's nice to be nice to the younger guys and the younger generation if you can.

And obviously now he's part of an elite group of tennis worldwide. I don't think he needs to be taken care of around on the tour anymore, but he's always been a nice guy, and his team is very nice. Juan Carlos Ferrero, I know him a little bit. When I was younger, I went to Alicante to practice and went to his academy a couple times before.

He's just, yeah, he's a nice person and doesn't make too much out of himself. He's just a humble guy. I know he works hard. So that was basically it. Yeah, I think he deserves a lot of success if he has it.

Q. Congratulations on your tournament. What does mean this tournament to your country? You're the first

Norwegian to reach Masters 1000 final.

CASPER RUUD: I don't know honestly, but I hope it can, you know, be part of putting Norway a little bit more on the map of tennis worldwide. It's a country that doesn't have too much history in tennis, and we don't have any big events either.

So I have said before that a goal of mine would be to bring a ATP Tour to Norway one time, I hope we can do it, and when you have big results, maybe someone in Norway could have their eyes up for trying to make a tournament in our country.

So it's obviously difficult because we need to find the right time of the year and everything needs to click well, but I think that would be a small dream of mine to play actually a tournament on home soil on the ATP Tour, because I never have the chance to do it. Sweden, they have two, so I hope Norway can have one also in the future.

Q. Congratulations on this amazing two weeks. Talking about specifically about these two weeks, they will move you up on the rankings. You will now be No. 7. Obviously just your thoughts on that. Also, Rafa played against Alcaraz in Indian Wells. He obviously has a similar game to yours, right? That topspin. What do you think was the biggest challenge was today to impose your conditions in terms of playing against Carlos?

CASPER RUUD: You know, it's always good to get a new career ranking. So it will be 7 tomorrow. I might have to call Ronaldo, because CR7 is at risk now (smiling). I don't know if we have to do some negotiations and see who can actually have this number.

But, no, I mean, I didn't watch the match too much, because I think it was a little bit different time and I was here in Miami. For me, the challenge, I think that with Alcaraz he has like firepower from both sides, so you can't really rest no matter which side you play to, because he goes aggressive from both sides. Usually like most players they prefer to, you know, maybe like myself, increase the pace with my forehand and then my backhand is maybe a little bit more solid and not as fast.

But with Carlos, he can counterpunch and be so aggressive from both sides. You never get like a resting point in the rallies, and that's very challenging and it's impressive that you can be so aggressive from both sides. Not too many players who does this.

Q. You got that treatment early in the second set. What was going on with your body?

CASPER RUUD: Well, it was just a little bit my left hip was bothering me a little bit. It's something that has been bothering me before in the past, so it wasn't too bad.

I just felt like it would be a good time to try to release it a little bit. It just needs a little, yeah, treatment and deep tissue that kind of releases the tension around the TFL. I don't know if you're familiar with all the muscles in the hip, but that one needs to loosen up a little bit and then I'm good to go.

There is something that kind of sits in there that pinches a little bit, but as soon as the TFL is released, it's no problem again. Wasn't too much to be worried about, because I have felt this pain many times before and I don't think it will be hopefully bothering me too much either in the coming weeks.

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