

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

## Jakub Mensik

Press Conference



J. MENSIK/N. Djokovic

7-6, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Jakub, what a great tournament, great two weeks. How do you feel right now?

JAKUB MENSIK: I don't know. Probably all smiles (smiling). Yeah, I mean, it's a bit, I think that the feelings will come a little bit later, but for now, yeah, it just feels incredible. I'm living the moment, living the dream.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Congratulations. I mean, you beat your idol, your mentor, the guy who took you under his wing. You beat him at his own game, two tiebreakers, that's what he specializes in. How much has that guy meant to your career at this point?**

JAKUB MENSIK: Yeah, it means a lot. That's for sure all I'm saying. The feelings will come a little bit later, but even now, I'm starting to realize that it was incredible, you know, all week, all two weeks, actually.

My game was getting better and better. Actually, winning tonight against Novak in the tiebreakers, it feels crazy, incredible.

I was watching him, you know, growing up. Because of him basically I started to play tennis. So it just feels incredible that I had the opportunity for a second time to play against him. And to beat him in this tournament in the finals, which I really, it was just a dream to win an ATP tournament, and even better that it's 1000 (smiling). Yeah, playing against Novak in the finals makes it more special.

**Q. Tell us that story about you were going to withdraw from the tournament the day before the tournament? Day of the tournament? What happened?**

JAKUB MENSIK: I mean, two days before the first match, I started to feel my knee. I checked with the doctors, with everyone. There was nothing spectacular. It was just a big inflammation, which was really big that I couldn't walk

even, that I couldn't run, even walk.

Yeah, actually, I started to treat it, started to take painkillers. Nothing was helping. Actually during the match day it was the same, like, it was day before. So I was, like, okay, well, I tried to step on the treadmill. I couldn't move. I was, like, Okay, well, that's it. I'm pulling out.

I didn't do anything. I just went to the doctor's office, take the paper. I was going to the physios while I was visiting the referees office to say, Guys, I'm pulling out.

But he was having lunch. So, okay, let's visit the physios first. I was there. I said, Hey, my knee is hurting. Just fill the paper. I'm going. I'm going.

It was, like, Well, okay, let's see.

He started to do a couple of treatments, take care of for 30 minutes of me. Okay, try this, try this, let's see.

I was, like, okay. Actually he was saying me, It's nothing serious. You can play with this pain and nothing can happen.

So it's, like, okay, the pain was so big that I couldn't do anything. I was, like, okay, let's try one more time. I stepped on the treadmill. It was the same. But I went over the pain. Really I was suffering in those moments.

Yeah, after, you know, few minutes I was starting to feel little relief. Took different painkillers which helped a little bit. I was, like, Okay, let's try it. It's like 30 minutes before the match. I can walk. I can run. Let's see.

Somehow I won the first round, and basically then I had one day off, which of course for my knee was much more better. Day by day the knee was getting better and with that also my game.

Crazy, huh?

**Q. Right or left knee?**



JAKUB MENSİK: Right knee, yeah.

**Q. Congratulations on your win tonight. We spoke to Novak. He said he's never happy to lose. You're one of the very few players he's happier to lose to. He mentioned you trained at his club in Belgrade. He described your development and evolution as great. Can you discuss the level of respect you have for him, his level of respect for you? Novak was going for his 100th title. You have won this title. Can you imagine what it's like to win that many titles?**

JAKUB MENSİK: To be honest, I don't. Of course after the match when we had the time to talk and I heard what he was saying to me, I was just, oh, my God, that feels, that's so kind from him.

You can just see how incredible person he is. He's a true champion, because otherwise he wouldn't show this kind of respect, you know, so that's just amazing. Even with all those titles, you know, and everything, what he accomplished already in this sport, and he's still competing in the finals of the biggest tournaments on the ATP Tour.

So it's just, you know, it's just amazing. Yeah, playing with him and hearing him say those words, it's just, you know, for me, reason why I'm doing this and also that I'm really on a good path and that I'm doing great job.

Of course, like I said, I don't want to repeat myself, but, you know, because of him, I started to play tennis. Playing with him, you know, like reaching my biggest title so far with him, actually, you know, because I was playing against him in the finals, that just feels incredible.

I mean, it's unbelievable how good he is on and off the court.

**Q. Jakub, what was going through your mind when you dropped to the court when the last point was played? Did the Shanghai match also come into your mind at all?**

JAKUB MENSİK: First of all, I was expecting to fall already, you know, point before. But I saw it, it was out. You know, oh, that's it. It was actually in. Okay, well, let's go one more time. (Laughter.)

So after that, just the relief went out of me. I mean, after the match with Taylor, I was not able to sleep for two days. I was feeling, you know, nerves. I was trying to hold it, of course, but yeah, I mean, with this finals doing for the first time and everything, it's just very, very tough.

So of course, yeah, I mean, after that, just everything went

away of me. Just pure happiness, pure emotions.

And of course during the match, you know, I had couple of flashbacks also in Shanghai, I won the first set 7-6, so I didn't play well in the beginning of the second set in Shanghai, which I tried to stay focused, stay all the time on my serve, which I did, and I'm really glad, because otherwise playing third set against him, it would be tough.

So it's just, I took the experience from the Shanghai match and tried my best to do it as good as I can in here.

**Q. Novak mentioned how great your serve was in the tiebreakers, but really your return of serve, because in both tiebreakers you got a mini break right off the bat. So talk about how aggressive you played those tiebreakers, especially on the return of serve.**

JAKUB MENSİK: I mean, I was feeling all the match that I was doing really good on the return, but actually, you know, when the point was, you know, when we had rally, like, 50/50 rally, I was feeling that he's better than me.

So of course those games on his serve, it was going kind of fast, I mean, in the beginning of the second set and during the second half of the first set.

But, yeah, in the tiebreakers, I knew that if I can really start to focus on it, on my return, put it just ball in. And then, you know, give my best in the rallies, and actually, that I did in the tiebreakers, I didn't do the much mistakes like I was doing during the whole set, and yeah, actually, he was the one who did the first mistake.

So, yeah, it was just -- I don't know if I was just lucky or maybe if just the tactic was good, because today after the rain was super humid, and it was just crazy. The rallies were long, so I was feeling really like very tired after few points with him.

So, yeah, I'm just glad that it didn't went to the third set.

**Q. Do you realize, Jakub, that when Novak played his first Masters 1000, you weren't even born?**

JAKUB MENSİK: Wow (smiling).

**Q. What does that say to you?**

JAKUB MENSİK: Oh, my God. It's crazy. It's just -- I don't know what to say (smiling). He's just showing his dominance, like 2004 actually, I think it was, when I was not born.

**Q. It was 17 days before you were born.**

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JAKUB MENSİK: All right. Oh, wow. You read the Wikipedia before? (Laughter.)

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No, no, no, I think that this, like I'm saying, it's showing his dominance, like, 20 years ago he was already in the finals, and now 20 years later, he's still in the finals.

So he's top 5 still. So it's just crazy and unbelievable what he's achieving in this sport during long period of the time. Imagining me in 20 years from now, which I will be 39 playing the finals? I hope so, but it's, yeah, it's crazy, like, to think about it like this.

**Q. You seemed to have trouble with the dropshot earlier in the match, but later seemed like you were anticipating what he was going to do. Did you sense you were reading him better as the match went on?**

JAKUB MENSİK: Yeah, actually during the first, you know, like, couple of games, couple of rallies, I was feeling I need to read his game a little bit. Yeah, like you were saying during the match, I was just, you know, trying to read it a little bit better, which more and more I was playing, it was getting better and better.

So during the dropshots, also the forehands inside in, I kind of read it, as well. That's why we made those long rallies, because after all the returns that I hit back, few times he just hit the winner plus one shot, and, you know, in the tiebreakers, I stayed in the rally, and it was just 50/50 rally. It was also good point.

**Q. You wrote on the camera lens, "The first of many." Can you talk about what that means to you? Was that an announcement to the rest of the tour? Was that you just being so proud of getting the win and looking forward to the rest of your career?**

JAKUB MENSİK: It was just, of course, right now it's biggest win of my career so far, and I'm just super happy with that.

But I know that this is not the end, and I know that this is just the beginning for me. Yeah, I'm still 19 years old, so I have all of my career in front of me. Of course it feels really great to have this next to me, but it's, you know, it's not just about the one title, one tournament, but, you know, I'm hungry for more.

Of course right now I will celebrate, rest. When I will come back home, I'm going back to work and try to get better and better, because still there is a lot of space for improvement in my game, so I will, me and my team, will do my best to lift these trophies more often.

