



NEWS

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DJOKOVIC SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDS DUBAI TITLE



Dubai, UAE, February 28th, 2010: Novak Djokovic triumphed 7-5 5-7 6-3 against Mikhail Youzhny to win one of the most dramatic finals in the 18-year history of the Barclays Dubai Tennis Championships on Sunday. He is only the second player after Roger Federer to successfully defend the title, and it was the first time in his career that Djokovic has managed the feat.

The second-seeded Serb needed to battle for three hours 21-minutes in a match that had to be continued on a second day after torrential rain, thunder and lightning caused play to be suspended on Saturday evening. When play was stopped, Djokovic had gained the upper hand and was leading 7-5 2-0. If he thought he was going to continue to a straight-sets victory, however, seventh seeded Youzhny had other ideas and his great serving and powerful backhand kept him contention right to the end.

There had been little to separate them in the first set, with Youzhny saving a break point with a smash before holding for 1-1, followed by two exchanges of breaks. Youzhny broke to lead 3-2 when Djokovic made a forehand error, but the Serb broke back immediately and then broke again to lead 5-3 by forcing a backhand error from his opponent.

But he failed to serve out the set, double-faulting to set up break point and then netting a backhand. Then, with the set seemingly heading for a tiebreak, Djokovic forced a forehand error on break point at 6-5 to sneak the first set after 63 minutes.

The second set was just as balanced, with Youzhny recovering the break of serve at 3-1 and Djokovic then having a golden opportunity to break for a commanding 5-3 lead. But he made an error on an easy forehand volley, and Youzhny then broke to lead 5-4, resulting in Djokovic smashing his racquet and receiving a warning. A netted backhand then allowed Djokovic to level at 5-5, but the resilient Russian went on to win the last two games of the set at love to level at one set all.

Djokovic struggled again in the deciding set, breaking in the second game and holding four points for a 4-1, only for Youzhny to level at 3-3. In a dramatic conclusion, Djokovic had to fight off two break points before holding serve for 4-3, and a backhand that fell fractionally long gave the defending champion a final and decisive break for 5-3.

"It took a lot of energy for me," said Djokovic after receiving his trophy in a ceremony that featured His Highness Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, H.H. Sheikh Hasher bin Maktoum al Maktoum, President of Tennis Emirates and Abdul Rahman Falaknaz, Vice President of Tennis Emirates.

"Stopping and playing, and coming back and then again stopping the match last night because of the rain. If we continued last night I think I had much better chance to get the job done in two sets. I felt really good on the court, hitting the ball and feeling relaxed.

"Today I was really nervous before the match, during the match for no reason. You could see my frustrations when I lost the break at four-all. But, you know, again, I think more or less a very similar story from the past matches here in this tournament. I am down in the match and basically on the verge of losing but still coming back, fighting through. Winning the tournament in any way it's a huge success."

The Barclays Dubai Tennis Championships is held under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai and owned and organised by Dubai Duty Free.

