

# cinch Championships

Thursday, 20 June 2024

London, England, UK

Queens Club

## Jack Draper

Press Conference



J. DRAPER/C. Alcaraz

7-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Jack. Great performance. What did you do differently today to just get out there and get a solid win?

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, I think I didn't feel too nervous or anything today. It was just kind of another match. I didn't really think about it too much, obviously knowing I'm playing an unbelievable player in Carlos, someone who has played a lot of amazing tennis.

It's only his second match on the grass. I knew this was going to my seventh. So I have played a lot of tennis in the last couple of weeks, and I keep on building my confidence and my general level.

So I think, yeah, I was calm, I was composed, and I'm glad I was able to come through the match today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Well play. The stats say it was the best win of your career. Did it feel like the best match of your career, the best you have played?**

JACK DRAPER: I mean, not the best I have played, no. Obviously on paper, yeah, it probably is the best win of my career, but, you know, I felt like I played a good level today. I felt like my serve could have been a bit better, and it has been a bit better recently, but I think if you put into account the occasion, the player, and everything that comes with the match today, I think it was a really, really good match on my side. So I'm really happy.

**Q. There was obviously a big outpouring of emotion from you at the end. I think that's the highest I have seen you jump on a tennis court, I think. How much of that was relief at having not been here last year to play on the grass? That must have been a very emotional feeling to play at home and win at home?**

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, definitely I have got through a lot in the last couple of years. Obviously coming here two years ago, beating Fritz, I had just broken the top 100, I

felt like, you know, like a bit of an imposter at the tournament. I had been here when I was very young watching Andy play, and it was a completely new experience for me.

Then obviously last year having to miss out on the grass really hurt, but at the same time, I was nowhere near ready. I was injured all over my body. I had shoulder problems, hip problems. Yeah, my body was just made of glass at that point. Mentally, as well, I wouldn't have been ready either.

I think it was kind of a blessing in disguise, because ever since I came back from those injuries last year since September I have been really putting in great work. I got back with my old fitness coach, Steve Kotze, who is incredible, worked with many top players.

Yeah, I have just managed to stay on court. My practices have been amazing, and I have been building to this point. Good in the last couple of weeks it's starting to come together exactly at the right time when I want it. There is no place I'd rather be than here in London, here on the grass, playing in front of a home crowd. Feels amazing.

**Q. From seeing you in Adelaide at the beginning of the year and reaching that final to now, what would you say or suggest have been the biggest changes for you?**

JACK DRAPER: I think experiences. You know, since Adelaide, I was playing good level, and the period sort of after Australia up until I suppose the grass, the clay court swing was really difficult for me.

I played a lot of top players. I wasn't seeded in the events. So even though I was 40 in the world, you know, I'd win one round and then I was playing Fritz or Hurkacz or Jarry or someone, and I was losing 7-6 in the third I think three times in a row.

If I'd turn those matches the other direction, my ranking and everything could have been in a very different place, and my confidence and everything.

So that was a really, really difficult time for me, because I wasn't getting many matches. I was kind of losing it early on and feeling like I was actually playing pretty well.

And then I suppose after the clay court season, I kind of spoke to my team, and I just had to commit to being more aggressive on the tennis court, because I was losing those matches because I wasn't willing to grab the match and take it on my own terms.

So I'd say the biggest difference from my side is less fear of making errors, going after the ball more, and trying to play to win instead of play for the opponents to miss. Often at this level, you drop the ball short, they don't miss too much.

**Q. Congratulations, Jack. Beating Carlos Alcaraz is quite a statement. How do you think you can now do in this tournament? Can you go on and win it?**

JACK DRAPER: Yeah. I mean, I'm thinking match by match. You know, obviously it's amazing to beat someone like Carlos, and that's great, but in tennis, you've got to go again the next day. I've got to go again tomorrow against another great player in Tommy Paul.

I'm not going to get too high on this win. Obviously it's nice to reflect on things when you're done with the week and the wins you have had, but my main priority right now is to make sure I'm doing everything I can to be best prepared for tomorrow, because, you know, everyone at this level, if you're not quite on your game, they can beat you.

So it's really important for me to be better for tomorrow, and if I keep putting my game on the court, then I'm giving myself a good chance to win the match.

**Q. Just in terms of the week you have had, first title, British No. 1, and now definitely the signature win that you have had, it's happening quite quickly.**

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, definitely. I mean, it kind of feels obviously like a bit of an overnight success, but, you know, I have been working for so many years now.

So like I said, after my injuries last year, I really started to, you know, fully invest in my tennis mentally, physically, emotionally. I was kind of living it every day is all I think about since sort of September last year. I have been really, really making so many sacrifices and putting in the work all the time.

So even though it's come together in the last sort of two weeks, you know, this is not overnight. This is years of doing it.

So really happy with how it's come together the last couple of weeks, as you said, especially at this time, you know, on the grass in front of home crowds, and hopefully I can carry on this momentum and keep on building.

**Q. You have spoken a lot now about this new attacking mindset. I'm thinking probably the two biggest points of this match, the breakpoint you had, you hit a winning return, and then the next game, breakpoint down, you played the serve and volley. How satisfying is it that you're able to execute in that kind of, you know, that kind of fearless style on the biggest points?**

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, I mean, that was the thing kind of at French Open and when I first started standing up the baseline on return, I'd always stood so far back, and I had this fear of missing that, you know, I just had to make the ball in court and make them play an extra ball. You know, that just wasn't getting it done.

So when I did start doing it on the clay, I was very lost, you know. It wasn't working out for me. But I kept on committing to it.

Yeah, in the last couple of weeks, you know, I have just said, like, this is the way I'm going to play, this is what I'm doing. You know, that's one of the biggest differences in my game is the way I'm willing to take risk and be aggressive and take it to my opponent, so that sort of breakpoint was a good illustration of what I'm trying to achieve out there.

**Q. I know you touched on it on court, but what does it mean for a win of this magnitude to come in front of your extended friends and family? If you've spoken to them, what does it mean for them to be here and see it?**

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, it feels incredible. My friends from my old school, I got them tickets a couple of times seeing me play. They're at uni doing their own thing. It's just amazing for them to watch obviously me play on such a big court in front of a lot of people.

Then I have my whole team, my family, my granddad here, he's just turned 80, his wife Brenda. My nan, she sort of introduced us to tennis. But unfortunately she's had dementia for the last 12 years, and he's been looking after her. So I have done some stuff actually with the Alzheimer's charity.

Yeah, even though she doesn't understand what's going on, it's amazing for him to be here, be a part of tennis, be a part of my success. Yeah, he's lives and breathes it. He's always on the live rankings, Resultina, all that stuff. Like, what's this person doing, you know, in the 15K, and wherever it is in the world? I say, I don't know. Just give me a day off tennis, Mate. (Laughter.)

But, no, I'm incredibly lucky to have such amazing people support me on a daily basis. That's kind of what brings the glue together as a tennis player, because it's such an

individual sport and it's so relentless and tiring and there is a lot of things that go into it. Very lucky to have such amazing people.

**Q. You talked about the difficult periods during the clay season, tight losses. Curious what it's like, the main takeaway, learning, your takeaway from that period going into the rest of your career?**

JACK DRAPER: Yeah, I just think I was playing in such, I was playing so within myself, and every time I was feeling I can play so much better than this, it's not happening, and I was still losing 7-6 in the third, giving myself chances, match points, and I wasn't coming through the matches.

I felt like I had a little bit of a mental block, as well. Then I think last week, getting over the line, you know, you'd think first title, coming to London, I would feel maybe a bit more on edge, a bit more anxious, a bit more sort of wanting to succeed, whereas I feel the opposite. I feel really calm, and I think it's because I proved to myself I really do belong at this level and I can get through those tough moments against really good players like Berrettini or Tiafoe, today Alcaraz. I'm building confidence the whole time. It's helping me to feel like I belong.

I suppose, yeah, it's just a process of, you know, confidence takes time, belief takes time, and I have had to be very patient.

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