



## ARTS & CULTURE

# Djokovic Leaves 'Greatest' Debate to Others

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“How does it feel to be the greatest male player in history?” a reporter asked after Novak Djokovic of Serbia set the male record for winning the Grand Slam singles **titles** in tennis.

The Grand Slam is made up of the Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon, and the U.S. Open.

Djokovic, Nadal and Federer, known as “the Big Three”, have won more Grand Slam titles than any other male players. But Nadal did not play in the French Open this year because of injuries. And Federer retired from tennis last year.

On Sunday, Djokovic won his 23rd Grand Slam title at the French Open by defeating Casper Ruud of Norway. That is one more than Rafael Nadal of Spain with 22 and three more than Roger Federer of Switzerland with 20. Margaret Court of Australia holds the women’s record with 24.

For years, people have argued over which of the three male tennis players should be thought of as the “GOAT”, or the greatest of all time.

Djokovic offered his thoughts on the question:

“I mean, I don’t want to say that I am the greatest, because I feel — I’ve said it before — it’s disrespectful towards all the great champions in different **eras** of our sport that was played in a completely different way than it is played today,”

“So,” the 36-year-old from Serbia continued, “I leave those kind[s] of discussions of who is the greatest to someone else.”

Djokovic also spoke about his childhood and the support he had during that time.

"Going back to the 1990s when I was four, five years old, and we had [a] couple of wars," Djokovic said. Travel limits meant that Djokovic could not play in some junior tournaments. He added, "My family was on a very low budget. But my parents still decided to support me in my dream."

Talking about his parents, he said they "had to go through a lot of difficulties, financially, emotionally, whichever way, for me to sit here. So I don't forget about that. I actually carry it in my heart."

His parents, Srđan and Dijana, had no tennis **background**. So Djokovic trained with Jelena Gencić who he called his "tennis mother."

"She was a true **mentor** . . . I used to go to her home, and we did many different things that were shaping my mind as a human being," he said.

At age 12, Djokovic moved to Germany, where he spent four years training with Nikola Pilić.

As for what is coming next, Djokovic said, "I feel if I'm winning Slams, why even think about ending the career that already has been going on for 20 years?"

"I look forward, already, to Wimbledon," he said.

I'm Jill Robbins.

*Andrew Smith adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on reporting from The Associated Press and Reuters.*

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## Words in This Story

**title** -*n.* the name representing the winner of a competition or the competition itself

**era** -*n.* a period of time, usually lasting several years or longer

**background** -*n.* experience or training in a certain area or subject

**mentor** -*n.* a person who gives advice and guidance to another person, usually over a long period of time

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