
Djokovic criticises "extreme" US Open COVID-19 safety measures

By: Liam Morgan
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World number one Novak Djokovic has labelled COVID-19 safety measures set to be implemented if this year's US Open goes ahead as "extreme" and suggested he may not travel to New York for the tournament.

The comments from Djokovic in an interview with *Prva TV* in his native Serbia came after Ashleigh Barty and Rafael Nadal, first and second on the women's and men's world rankings, respectively, expressed doubts over competing at the event.

Djokovic, the head of the Association of Tennis Professionals Player Council and a three-time US Open winner, criticised planned safety protocols for the final Grand Slam of the year, scheduled to run from August 24 to September 13.

The professional tennis season has been suspended until at least July in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

"I had a telephone conversation with the leaders of world tennis, there were talks about the continuation of the season, mostly about the US Open due in late August, but it is not known whether it will be held," Djokovic, a 17-time Grand Slam champion, said.

"The rules that they told us that we would have to respect to be there, to play at all, they are extreme.

"We would not have access to Manhattan, we would have to sleep in hotels at the airport, to be tested twice or three times per week.

"Also, we could bring one person to the club which is really impossible."



Women's world number one Ashleigh Barty has also expressed doubts over travelling to the US
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Nadal also raised concern about travelling to the United States to compete at the event, which organisers currently still plan to hold as scheduled despite the coronavirus pandemic.

A decision on the US Open, traditionally the final Grand Slam of the year, is due to be made by organisers this month.

"It's not an ideal situation - if you ask me today if I want to travel to New York to play a tennis tournament, I will say no," the Spaniard said.

"I am confident they will make the right decisions in the right moment to be sure that if [the US Open] is played it is going to be under extremely safe circumstances - if not, in my opinion, it doesn't make sense."

Barty, the reigning French Open champion, told the *Sydney Morning Herald* she will make a decision once she has received all information from the tennis authorities.

"It's exciting that tennis is being talked about again and things are moving in the right direction for us to start competing," the Australian said.

"But I'd need to understand all of the information and advice from the Women's Tennis Association and the USTA [US Tennis Association] before making a decision on the US events."

"It's not just me, it's my team I have to consider."
