

Karen Khachanov - RBC: "Djokovic calls me a professor"

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Translated interview with Karen Khachanov from sportrbc.ru

The eighth racket of the world Karen Khachanov gave an interview to RBC, in which he told about the path to tennis, spending, victory over Djokovic and prospects at the 2020 Games in Tokyo. He also revealed how much tennis players actually earn from prize money at tournaments.



Karen Khachanov turned 23 on May 21. Today he is the first racket of Russia and the eighth tennis player of the world. He had a major career leap in early November 2018. He then won the Paris Masters Series, knocking out Filip Krajinovic, Matthew Ebden, John Isner, Alexander Sverev and Dominic Thiem. In the final in two sets Khachanov beat the first racket of the world Novak Djokovic with a score of 7:5, 6:4. This is Khachanov's first and so far only victory in the Masters Series. At last Wimbledon, he reached the third round, where he lost to the future semifinalist of the tournament Roberto Bautista Agut.

In this interview you will learn:

- what predictions Khachanov gave at Wimbledon after the fourth round of competition,
 - How i returned the money to my uncle for his career help,
 - "How much does it cost to do professional tennis,
 - How much do tennis players actually get,
 - "Will he do business,
 - as Djokovic calls Khachanova,
 - is it possible to unseat Federer, Djokovic and Nadal from the top three,
 - Which football club he supports
 - What he reads and watches
 - Olympic ambitions.
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- **Hot on the heels: how do you like Wimbledon (interview was recorded on July 11)?**

"Everything is as usual in the English style. It stands out from all Grand Slam tournaments. It's a different feeling.

- **How will you rate your performance?**

There is no limit to perfection. You used to want to go through a circle, two, three. It's good for you, then when you do it regularly, it's good. And when you're always playing in the quarter-finals, you want more. I look more at how I played and which opponents I beat.

The performance can be attributed to the asset, as in the second round defeated Feliciano Lopez, who specializes in grass and repeatedly reached the quarter-finals of Wimbledon. Therefore, to beat an inconvenient opponent for yourself is a big plus. And now he has lost to Bautista Agut, who has a chance to reach the semi-finals.

- **"Was Agut, to whom you conceded, so good?"**

Just a little bit. All aspects of the game should have done a little better. He played very well, solidly, without mistakes, and the grass suits him very well, because he has strong and low punches. Now the grass has slowed down and the pranks have become longer. I didn't play very well, and after the tie-break everything went wrong and I couldn't turn the game around. He was better that day.

- **Who will win Wimbledon?**

It's hard to say. I think one of the three (Nadal, Federer, Djokovic) will win. Can Federer win if they reach the semi-finals of Nadal and Federer. We must remember that Nadal beat him on the ground. But again, that doesn't mean Nadal is not good on grass, many underestimate him and prefer Djokovic. At the same time, Nadal played three times in the Wimbledon final and won twice.

- **Is Federer not your favorite?**

With the game he's playing now, he's got a chance.

- **"Your parents told me that they gave you to tennis without any specific goals. When did you realize it was going to grow into a profession? Especially the situation was risky, because your parents were not millionaires and in case of failure you would be left in limbo. When did you realize it was your job?"**

"Awareness comes when you start making money. I wanted to become a professional from the age of 12-13. I told my parents that I loved tennis and wanted to connect life with sports. The understanding that this has become a profession came about when I started winning ATP matches in Moscow and St. Petersburg. It's one thing when you imagine it, and it's quite another when you succeed.

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- **"I know you've thanked your uncle, Aleksandr Sejonz many times (hoff's co-owner, husband of Khachanov's father's sister). Did his initiative help you or did his parents turn?"**

"The initiative was more parents. My uncle then said to me, "Get into the top 3 in Russia, and then I will start sponsoring you." When I was 14 years old, I entered the top three, and that's what we agreed to.

- **Was there a strong motivation?**

Yes, I do. So we discussed that tennis is a very expensive sport - here you pull everything yourself, including the staff who work for you. These are colossal expenses that people can't even imagine. Therefore, it was also motivation, and hope that it will be possible to play.

- **"Did you get pressured that your uncle sponsored you?" Did you feel indebted?**

"To begin with, we agreed with him that he was starting to sponsor me, to help me. If I can realize myself, I would like to give him back the money that was spent on me. There was no such thing as someone putting pressure on me. When I became self-sufficient in 2016, I had a desire to return the money that was spent on me.

- **How much did you give to your uncle in 2016? What were the costs?**

"Let me tell you how much money is needed a year. It's up to you, what kind of coach do you want. The cost of a coach, a physiotherapist, a masseur is completely different. When I was in the top 150, it was in 2015, I spent about 200,000 dollars on the team. Since 2016 and further there was an opportunity to take additional classes with a fitness trainer. Now The head coach, fitness coach and physiotherapist are constantly moving with me. Annual expenditures have increased to 400-500 thousand. On the team. These are salaries, flights, accommodation. You pay for it yourself.

This is not the money we get.

- **" According to the ATP website, you have earned a little more than \$6.5 million in your career. What do you spend your money on and in fact how much you have left?**

"Let's start with what is officially written on the ATP website. I want to explain to people that this is not the money we get. In many European countries, very large progressive taxes, also in the United States. The ATP website is written without taking into account taxes. And I don't know why they write that.

- **"If we deduct taxes, the minus turns out to be 40-50%?**

"Yes, it's safe to say that. In fact, you can safely deduct 40% of the amount. In fact, you spend on the team, taxes and comes out a completely different amount. I'm not complaining, but I want people to understand that.

- **Where do you invest your money?**

"It's a personal topic...

- **"Maybe you're launching your brand?**

Not yet. I'm focused on tennis. In the future I will look at the situation. Maybe there will be offers. I can honestly say that I do not invest in anything, spend on the team, family, life. A very large part is spent on the maintenance of the team and the game.

- **How important is it for you to form a personal brand "Karen Khachanov"?**

"It's very important.

You need to clearly understand who will follow this, what you will do and what risks are behind it. So it is possible and pro... Money.

- **"Who is you doing social media and how do you feel about them?" Does it affect your brand?**

"Agent and I do social media. I will not deny that Some posts myself write. Creating a personal brand is very important. Through social media you try to show or paint a picture of your personality. Now people judge a lot on Instagram. People sometimes just can't understand that it's a joke, and start writing incomprehensible comments. People take very seriously, you like a picture that you wrote under it ... But we are working on a personal brand, it is important to create our image.

- **Is there a feeling that even with a great game of tennis, the question of business is just as important?**

At the moment? Yes, I do.

"Well, I don't do anything but tennis yet. So far, I want to focus all my attention and energy on tennis and my career, not business. If you want to be serious about something, you can't just take it and poke your finger: "I want to do business, I want to play tennis, I want to play football!" I'm not saying it's impossible to invest money somewhere. But you need to clearly understand who will follow this, what you will do and what risks are behind it. So it is possible and pro... Money.

- **There is an example of Anna Kournikova, who, in fact, did not win anything, and there is an example of Maria Sharapova, who has sung everywhere. Maybe you or the agent had any thoughts discussing your business history with Sharapova?**

"I'm very good with Masha. I know each other personally. Not so close, but I know who she is, hope she knows who I am (laughs). I respect her very much, she has achieved a lot, one of the most titled tennis players in Russia. But she has long gone to America, and in America the work of PR services is more professional. She has a very large audience around the world. In Russia, they gradually come to the fact that it is necessary to promote your brand, to invest in PR. But creating a brand is a very long time. And as for the results, they only help the business.

- **Why you can't train in Russia all year round? When you were at Ivan Urgant's, he said that he started to visit Russia more often. How will you assess the infrastructure in the country? How much has changed since you started? Why can't you train in Russia all year round?**

"The infrastructure has changed a lot. I love Moscow very much, I love Moscow and I say that often because of the schedule I can not fly. I miss home, especially here well in the summer. The center of Moscow has been remade very cool, you can walk. Everything is very comfortable and comfortable. But again, why I don't train here all year: it all depends on the season and the tournament.

We've got a calendar we've been living on for decades, so you can't train here in December before going to the tournament in Australia. It's cold here, and we have to train in the gym for eight months. Now Before the USA I will train in Moscow.

When the weather is good, you can train outside. It's the same with the US Open. I'll probably come here after him and stay here for the second part of the season because the tournaments will be in the gym. And in winter it is difficult, again traffic jams, weather. Weather is the main factor. You can't train

in front of Australia in the gym when it's minus 20 and you're going there in plus 40. It is the same with the United States and Dubai.

- **If you discard sports logistics, today in Moscow you can train all year round? Are there courts?**

"There are courts, stadiums and complexes. They're just unsuitable for conditions when you need to play in hot countries in winter. I also have an international team. I could bring my team to Russia in the winter. I have a coach from Croatia, a fitness coach from Spain, a physiotherapist and a masseur from France. It is clear that everyone can be gathered here, if all the conditions coincided.

- **Is it more expensive?**

It's not a fact. So I have to fly to Europe and train elsewhere. Otherwise, three will have to be brought. It's pretty much the same.

- **Why interest in tennis in Russia has fallen? When we were younger, tennis in Russia was very popular thanks to President Boris Yeltsin. Crowds of fans went to the Kremlin Cup. Does Putin really need to take a racket for the people to go to tennis?**

Of course, if Vladimir Vladimirovich takes a racket, for that he will have to say a big thank you. But we must understand that Russia is a very big country and people like different sports. We've been cold most of the year. In addition to football, we are popular mainly winter sports - hockey, biathlon, skiing, figure skating. And tennis is such an aristocratic, expensive sport. Parents must be provided, or should be sponsors.

- **"At your winning Kremlin Cup, the hall was not packed.**

- Compared to previous years, there were obviously more fans. It was very decent at the final. At least in Moscow I haven't seen so much before. Again, the fans in Russia have such a mentality that if you are in the top five or ten of the strongest in the world, they will come to see you.

- **"Come to the name?"**

Not really. Sometimes people just don't have the opportunity. But most of them want to come to name, for example, Federer. When Sharapova came to Moscow a few years ago, all the tickets were sold. They came to her. Basically my theory works.

- **Did you ask Nadal, Djokovic, Federer why they are so rarely at tournaments in Russia?**

"They don't make sense. Tournament-250 (a series of small tournaments that bring 250 points for winning them. - RBC) is not big enough for them. Federer came twice, Tsonga came. Many Masters series tournaments are missed because of the schedule.

- **Is there any potential to gather the strongest tennis players in Russia?**

"It depends on the organizers and on the money.

- **"Is everything in the money?"**

Mostly. You mean what it takes to elevate a tournament in Russia to the level of the Masters?

- **Yes, I do.**

It's a complicated system. Organizers buy the license from the ATP. Someone buys it for five years or ten years. To do this, you need another Masters to withdraw from the license and move it to another location. And, of course, there must be investors. But even if there were investors now, it is not a fact that it would turn out. There are a lot of factors. Even I don't know what it's all about.

- **On the main tennis players of the era, What kind of man is Novak Djokovic, with whom you often cross paths?**

I met Novak in 2016, when I got into the top 100 of the ATP rankings - RBC) and we started playing against each other. We trained together a couple of times. It's pleasant and open enough. Personally, he can even suggest something. It's simpler.

- **"What does he call you or did he start parodying you?"**

"He pokes me all the time and says I'm a professor or that I'm a tennis academic. But I tell him, "What's the big deal you're talking about, and who are you then? .." I remember him saying, "I'd like your serve."

- **Federer, Nadal, Djokovic. What would you learn from everyone?**

Federer - right-hand strike, serve. He's got the best right-hand shot in tennis. Nadal - mentality, head, fight, gnaw you, but nothing just will not give. Machine! When you play a little bit worse, you can lose 0:6. Djokovic is something in the middle: plasticity, can cling on and beat you to zero, hit the left, move on the court.

- **A year ago, you said your goal was to be number one. Is that real with a trio like that? Do you need them to get too old?**

"I try, try and do. No matter how old they are, if they are still in the top three, it says a lot. In doing so, I would like to achieve my goal when they are still playing. But I don't want to just say I'm going to be the first.

- **Do you have a goal before the end of the year?**

Yes, I do. It would be very good if I could gain a foothold in the top ten, considering that I didn't start very well. It may seem that here I entered the top 50, top 20, top 10 and so continue, but not so simple. For example, last year I set a goal to finish in the top 20, and finished 11th. But don't swear. Everything can change at every tournament.

About the trinity. I'm glad I caught them and play with them in the same tournaments. I'm happy to beat Djokovic in Paris in the final. Yes, they win Grand Slam tournaments all the time. But if you look at the rating, there were zverev, Tsitsipas, Medvedev. These are people who are now in the top ten along with tennis legends.

- **Do you feel that the trio is close?**

"We are all of a good level, and we must be aware that you are not so far away from them. But don't relax. We need to rejoice and be motivated to achieve our main goals.

- **"Before the victory in Paris, you said that you had called Marat Safin, but did not tell you what you were talking about. What did he tell you then?"**

I corresponded with him and asked how to win Paris - one of his favorite tournaments. He gave advice on the game, tactics. He played against Djokovic for a long time, but he knew him. I was interested to hear it. Thank him for that.

- **"You often talk about Safin, but you haven't spoken about Evgeny Kafelnikov. Isn't it a shame that he pays more attention to football?"**

I know Eugene, too. Legendary tennis player. It's up to him what kind of sport to prefer. He watches tennis.

- **About Spartak, Real Madrid and books; What other sports are you following?**

Basketball, football.

- **Who are you rooting for?**

For Real Madrid in football. Sidan, Raoul, Beckham... I've been following this club ever since. And in basketball, for LeBron James.

- **Why did Real Madrid fail last season?**

The team won three seasons in a row, then the team crumbles a little, the head coach leaves, the main player. In this case, you don't have to count on much

- **What club are you worried about in Russia?**

More for Spartak. As a child he trained at Spartak tennis school. I don't follow Russian football that much. But sometimes I find Spartak matches.

- **Will they fight for the top three?**

I'd like to.

- **What are you reading?**

"I don't read as much as I would like. Now I'm reading Arthur Haley's Hotel. I love novels more.

- **"Are you assorizing yourself with some character?"**

"From what I've read, I haven't yet. I read a lot of Remark, and he has the same subject: "Three comrades," "Life on borrowed" ... The same theme, but it develops it in different ways, and it's still exciting.

- **What TV series are you watching?**

I'm watching a lot. I'll highlight "Blacklist," "Breaking Bad," "Escape."

- **Game of Thrones?**

I haven't watched a single series. There's nine seasons... I don't even want to start. I don't like fiction very much. The Russians liked "Home Arrest." I was also advised to look at Method.

- **How important is the Olympic tournament to you? Ahead of Tokyo 2020.**

I'd like to participate. For tennis players, it's like the fifth Grand Slam tournament every four years. For me, this is an important tournament - you fight not only for yourself, but also for the country. I would like to play and compete there for medals.