

# A Year After Being Deported, Novak Djokovic Makes History Winning Australian Open as Bill Gates Looks On

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Theme: [Science and Medicine](#)

Global Research, February 01, 2023

[Children's Health Defense](#) 30 January 2023

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*One year after he was [deported for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine](#) — precluding him from playing in the 2022 Australian Open — tennis star **Novak Djokovic** on Sunday made history when he returned to Australia to win his 10th Australian Open and 22nd Grand Slam title.*

With **Bill Gates** in attendance, [Djokovic defeated Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas](#), becoming only the second player to win a men's Grand Slam competition 10 or more times. He also tied the record, held by Rafael Nadal, for Grand Slam wins.

Following his victory, [Djokovic visibly teared up](#), hiding his face in a towel while sitting on the sidelines awaiting the trophy presentation. Afterward, he told reporters:

"Of course, when I went into my box, I just think emotionally collapsed there and teared up, with especially my mother and my brother, when I gave them a hug, because up to that moment, I was not allowing myself to, I guess, be distracted with things off the court or whatever was happening in dealing with an injury, things happening off the court, as well, that could easily have been a big disturbance to my focus, to my game.

"It required an enormous mental energy really to stay present, to stay focused, to take things day by day, and really see how far I can go."

Djokovic had to overcome a hamstring injury, requiring him to receive "77 therapies a day," according to his coach, [Goran Ivanisevic](#).

He also faced a [media backlash involving his father](#), who earlier during the tournament was photographed with a group of fans holding the Russian flag and the "Z" symbol — understood as a sign of support for Russia in its conflict with Ukraine. His father did not attend Sunday's final.

But Gates — one of the world’s foremost proponents of the COVID-19 vaccine — did attend, however, watching the [semifinal](#) and the [final matches](#) of the men’s tournament.

Gates was in Australia to speak to the country’s Lowy Institute. His remarks [raised some eyebrows](#), when he appeared to be critical of the same COVID-19 vaccines he previously and enthusiastically promoted — and heavily invested in.

Bill Gates just admitted mRNA jabs don’t stop infection, don’t block transmission, don’t block mutants, don’t last, don’t work at all — after he sold stock in his vaccine ventures ☐☐☐. Thanks, Suckers!<https://t.co/a5ROLmha10>

— Robert F. Kennedy Jr (@RobertKennedyJr) [January 27, 2023](#)

## **Djokovic, an outspoken proponent of bodily autonomy, was willing to risk his career to remain unvaccinated**

Djokovic, known for his success on the tennis court, gained even wider fame for his outspoken stance against mandatory COVID-19 vaccination and for bodily autonomy.

In a February 2022 interview, a [BBC reporter asked Djokovic](#) if he was “prepared to forgo the chance to be the greatest player that ever picked up a racket, statistically, because you feel so strongly about the jab?”

“Yes, I do,” Djokovic responded. When prodded about why he felt that way, Djokovic stated, “Because the principles of decision-making on my body are more important than any title.”

Throughout 2022, Djokovic said he was willing to forego other Grand Slam tournaments, such as [Wimbledon and the French Open](#), rather than get vaccinated for COVID-19.

The issue resurfaced following Djokovic’s victory on Sunday, when tennis legend [John McEnroe and sports broadcaster Chris Fowler](#) engaged in a debate, live on ESPN, over Djokovic’s vaccination status and the tournaments he missed as a result.

Fowler said Djokovic missed tournaments such as the Australian Open and Wimbledon in 2022 as “a part of his choices, to be fair,” adding, “He made choices that led to that for some of those things.”

McEnroe, in response, said, “I think he should have been permitted to play.”

According to Fox News, McEnroe previously spoke out in [support of Djokovic’s stance](#), describing the Biden administration’s vaccination mandates that kept Djokovic out of the US Open as “BS.”

In August 2022, just prior to the US Open, Children’s Health Defense organized an “End All Travel Mandates” protest in support of Djokovic, attracting [mainstream media coverage](#).

Djokovic, who won the 2021 Australian Open, initially was issued a visa to enter Australia for the 2022 competition. However, authorities subsequently canceled the 35-year-old’s visa, then restored it and then canceled it again — leading to his expulsion.

At the time, Australia’s Immigration Minister [Alex Hawke unilaterally revoked Djokovic’s visa](#)

on “health and good order” grounds, “on the basis that it was in the public interest to do so.” Djokovic argued that he had secured a medical exemption allowing him to enter the country.

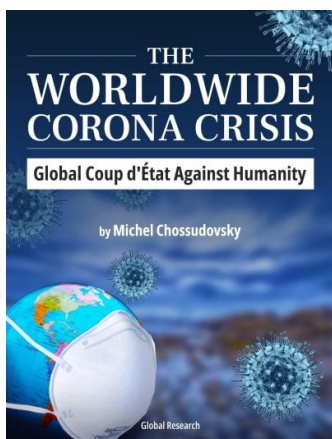
[Djokovic subsequently missed the US Open](#), another Grand Slam tournament, in September 2022, because the Biden administration wouldn’t lift its COVID-19 vaccine mandate for foreigners entering the country — even though [unvaccinated spectators](#) could attend US Open matches.

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Featured image: Novak Djokovic image credit: Manan Vatsyayana



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