Gruelling schedule highlighted as Alcaraz runs from stadium to airport

AFP – Carlos Alcaraz said Thursday he had no time to celebrate becoming the China Open champion thanks to the gruelling tennis schedule, rushing straight from the stadium to catch a flight to the ongoing Shanghai Masters.

Alcaraz defeated world number one Jannik Sinner over the course of a draining three hours and 21 minutes on Wednesday night in Beijing, but by noon the next day was already at a press conference in Shanghai.

The 21-year-old has previously said that the men's tennis schedule is "going to kill us", and that "we have to do something about it", but on Thursday seemed to rein in his criticism.

"The tennis schedule is so, so tight, we're travelling from tournament to tournament with just one or two days before the tournament begins, so it is difficult, but we have to get used to it," the Spaniard said.

He told reporters he had to take all his luggage to the stadium with him before the Beijing final, and only had time to do a press conference and take a shower before "running" to the airport.

"I just did everything in a rush… we arrived here in Shanghai super late so I couldn't sleep as much as I wanted," he said, adding that it was 4 am (2000 GMT Wednesday) by the time he got to the eastern Chinese city.

Alcaraz will play his first match of the tournament on Saturday against Shang Juncheng, who became only the second

player from China to win an ATP Tour singles title when he won the Chengdu Open last month.

“I’m going to approach the match the same way that I approach every match, I’m going to prepare as best as I can,” Alcaraz said.

“I hope to keep playing the same way that I’m playing and let’s see what’s going to happen, but I’ll be ready.”

Sinner will also be playing in Shanghai, with many seeing the rivalry between the two as the new narrative of the men’s game.

“We are not close friends, but I think the respect that we have puts us in a position that we have a really good relationship,” Alcaraz said on Thursday.

Also eying up the trophy is Novak Djokovic, who has won four times before in Shanghai and is targeting a 100th singles title.

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