

# Citi Open

Sunday, August 1, 2021  
Washington D.C.

## Frances Tiafoe

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. You just came back from the Olympics in Tokyo. Do you want to talk about your experience? Second part would be your match with Stefanos, if you saw any major differences in the one you played at Tokyo and the one at Wimbledon?**

FRANCES TIAFOE: No, the Olympics is a great experience. I'm happy I did it. Obviously I hope I can go again some years to see other sports, kind of enjoy a little bit more the experience.

All in all, it was really cool seeing the village, seeing all the other athletes, the opening ceremony. Met a lot of people. It was pretty cool. Definitely something I'm glad to say I achieved that, I'm an Olympian, something that really can't be taken from me. That's pretty cool.

As far as playing Stefanos, I think it was kind of like the reverse of what happened at Wimbledon. (Indiscernible) took a long break in each set. I played one or two loose points, got broken. He served really well, played well. Wasn't really much in the match. We are going to play a lot of times and it is going to go back and forth I'm sure.

**Q. I know you've been asked this before, but you obviously practiced with Rafa back in 2014. What do you remember about that practice? Did you think he would still be playing at such an incredibly high level seven years later?**

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, man, it's crazy how all those guys. Pretty cool to see. Pretty cool he's still playing, obviously. All the young guys have played him numerous times. It's just unbelievable that he came here to D.C. Having a player of his caliber here is pretty legendary.

**Q. You're a role model to so many players in the Atlantic Juniors section of the USTA, hometown hero. What advice would you give to juniors who dream of being on the pro tour?**

FRANCES TIAFOE: Obviously to keep playing as much

tennis as you can, keep sticking to your progress every day, have goals. When you achieve those goals, keep trying to strive for more.

Yeah, I mean, never think any dream is too big. I think everything is achievable if you put your mind to it. Ultimately day to day, play as much tennis as you can and enjoy the game. Those two things...

Hopefully we can see a lot more guys on the tour. That's the plan.

**Q. If you look at your statistics over the last 52 weeks, all of them are at career highs for you. Yet you look at the ranking, No. 54, a little bit off still your career high of 29. What are you looking forward to in terms of this summer hard court season as an opportunity to perhaps build back up that ranking, get back towards your career high?**

FRANCES TIAFOE: I think I've been playing great tennis. Honestly, I just got to keep staying at where I'm staying at. I've been winning a lot of matches lately, a lot more convincingly as well.

The rankings now are obviously tough, as well. They're not really showing how well you're actually playing. But I think everyone's in the same boat. I think if I can keep more consistent weeks back to back, I'll be all right.

It's not really about getting back to 29 in the world. I see myself as a top 15, top 10 guy. It's not really getting back to 29 in the world. I know I can do that. Being at the top of the game is what I'm approaching.

**Q. Last summer there was a limited opportunity to play North American hard court events. When you did play, there were no fans at all. You're now back in the United States, get to play in front of a home D.C. crowd. Throughout this summer how excited are you to get back out there playing in front of American fans?**

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, it's big. Just love that. Especially here, walking around the grounds and



everything, you feel the energy. They are going to get super behind me all week. It's going to be a super fun week. I'm really excited. Hopefully I can go for a nice run here. That would definitely mean a lot to me. This is one of my staples of the year, so I'm ready for it.

**Q. Connected to the last question, I wanted to ask you about what sort of difference it will make having full crowds back in New York after playing at last year's US Open with empty stands? Also, looking ahead to the US Open, I wanted to ask you about what Novak Djokovic is going to try to do there, win all four Grand Slam tournaments in one year, whether that just sort of has always seemed like an impossible task? What quality or trait of Novak's do you think is most important for him as he tries to complete that calendar Grand Slam in New York?**

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, playing in front of fans in New York is going to be crazy. I can't wait. They're one of the better fans, going to be going crazy, especially at night they'll all be drunk and stuff. Atmosphere will be great. I think all the players are super excited for it. That's something I'm really looking forward to. At Wimbledon, having fans back like that, it was unbelievable to play, that's what you work for.

Novak, I mean, the guy's special, man. He can play all on all surfaces, he's moving so well, his serve has gotten a lot better. Mentally, just the toughest in the world. Not necessarily he has the best forehand, backhand or whatever, just mentally he's so, so good.

As you raise your level, he's going to keep raising it, keep raising it, really make you beat him. He goes to a place that people just don't quite want to go to it seems like. He's always got an answer for you.

He's on the be brink of achieving something crazy special. As much as I love seeing greatness, I'd like it to stop, someone else win, preferably me. We'll see how it goes in the end.

**Q. As a local product from Maryland, how important is having this tournament in D.C. to local players, to have something to aspire to, even for yourself as a kid watching maybe Andy Roddick winning this event when you were younger?**

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, this tournament's big. I mean, for guys around the area, to see pro players, this is the real thing. Coming here and seeing del Potro win here, seeing James Blake, all these guys coming and playing here, legends, Lleyton Hewitt. You're like, Wow, I can maybe play with these guys one day, even be in the same

locker room as these guys, whatever.

I think those experiences definitely helped me to be the man I am today. I love this tournament being here, and I hope it can be here for years and years to come.

**Q. Coming into this tournament where do you feel your game is? Where do you feel your game is? Are you confident you have a run in you? I imagine a deep run here in D.C. is probably on your career bucket list. Are you confident coming into this week?**

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, very much so. Very much so. The best I felt in a while. Yeah, best I felt in a while. I'm playing some great tennis. I'm ready to go.

Why not? I mean, I've put some good matches in on grass, feeling good, feeling less jet lag from the Olympics now. By the time I go, I'll be ready to go.

**Q. When you say it's the best you've felt in a while, that's contributed to that?**

FRANCES TIAFOE: I mean, all in all my game, I won Nottingham, quarters of Queen's, the run at Wimbledon, I haven't won that many consecutive matches in a long time. I think I can play well, but so sporadically. To have that many wins in a short span was really nice. To beat a high-caliber player in a major, and very much so convincingly.

That gives you a lot of confidence. Yeah, I mean, I'm just ready for what's next. Hopefully I can keep on this road. Also I'm extremely happy right now just in general.

**Q. Mental health has become a big issue with Naomi Osaka, Simone Biles. Do you think in a way it's good that that's out there, athletes are people too, that you all need to focus on mental health like everybody else in the world?**

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, I think everyone's human. Everyone's going through a lot of things. Yeah, I mean, I think people being open about it, talking about their experiences is definitely big. Letting the fans and pretty much everyone else know what's going on with all the other athletes. Everyone is going through things.

But, yeah, I mean, we matter just as next as the much person, as the ordinary person. We're human. We're going to have mood swings, personal things go on that may affect our day to day. Being open about it, talking about it, I think is huge.

Yeah, I mean, that's pretty much all I got to say about it.

