

Citi Open

Tuesday, August 3, 2021

Washington D.C.

Denis Kudla

Press Conference



D. KUDLA/F. Lopez

6-3, 6-7, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Historically you haven't had the most success at this tournament. What do you think plays into that? How does getting this first-round win today help your confidence?

DENIS KUDLA: Yeah, I mean, my record previous years has been pretty bad except for one year where I did really well. I think just the pressure of playing at home, wanting to play well in front of family and friends, then just kind of being result-orientated. When you start thinking like that, you usually never play well. It's very difficult to do that. I struggled with that a long time.

I think a few years ago getting monkey off my back, I was able to use that experience today, and I allowed myself to play free, stay in the moment, play within myself. Getting this win is definitely giving me a lot of confidence, getting past that first round at home. I feel like I can free swing now and I'm excited for whatever else is to come.

Q. What does it mean to you to get a win in front of your family and friends?

DENIS KUDLA: It means evening. They don't get to watch me play live very often. To be able to do that here in front of family and friends, I feel like I knew half the stadium, it means a lot for me.

Q. How do you think your runs in June at Wimbledon and the tournament before help your confidence? Do you think you can channel the way you played in those two tournaments this week?

DENIS KUDLA: No, I mean, it was a big confidence boost for me, playing really well at Wimbledon, making third round, pushing Novak. So I'm trying to take that confidence, you know, into the U.S. swing. I wasn't able to really capitalize completely the last few weeks.

Every week's a new week and a new opportunity. I think I'm playing well. I just need to translate how I'm playing in practice into the matches. So far so good.

Q. How often are you in the D.C. area?

DENIS KUDLA: I actually haven't been back in a year. It's been a while. I try to come back as much as I can. Now I'm in Florida, so it's just with the crazy tournament schedule, playing non-stop, I just haven't had the opportunity to come back.

But it feels amazing to be here. Yeah, I couldn't be happier right now.

Q. Looking back at the last 12 months, how would you describe last season and your season this year?

DENIS KUDLA: Yeah, I mean, I felt like I had a couple up-and-down years leading up to when COVID started. I thought that I put in a great pre-season, and I was actually playing really well right when COVID happened. Kind of sucked for me at first from that point of view.

I had a great year, honestly. I stayed healthy. I was able to be around my family, my wife. I got married. Was able to see my friends more consistently. Just two of us really, we were in our own little bubble.

But coming back I struggled a little bit. I had some unfortunate events. Wasn't able to play Australia after putting in a good pre-season, wasted two weeks. Not wasted, but had to quarantine two weeks. Wasn't able to get my confidence back until just recently.

Now I feel I'm back on the track that I want to be on. Now it's just hanging onto that momentum, that confidence and building on it.

Q. Congrats on the wedding.

DENIS KUDLA: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Q. There's a lot of young players at this tournament,



including some young Americans. Do you pay attention to the next generation or is there anyone who has really impressed you?

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DENIS KUDLA: They all impress me. They're all great players. I think it's changing the guard right now with tennis. There's a huge opportunity for someone to make a big jump, who is going to be the next top guys. I think it's completely open.

But I don't really pay attention too much. I actually learn from them, the way they're playing the game, because they're going to be the future of the sport. I'm trying to maximize in the second half of my career. There's always room to improve. I'm learning from those young guys. That's about it.

To really watch it non-stop, I mean, the new generation, they just do things a little bit differently than the older guys. So I'm picking and choosing what I'm looking at.

Q. On the court or off the court or both?

DENIS KUDLA: Both, both, both. The way they play, big hitters. I would say my generation and the younger generation, you know, (indiscernible). So we'll see.

Q. US Open qualifying has always been important for young players, a lot of fans and families. The USTA has announced they will close quallies to the public this year, but they'll be at 100% capacity if you can afford a ticket to the main draw. They're saying they're doing this to protect you, the player. Do you feel more protected with quallies being closed off to the fans?

DENIS KUDLA: Obviously it's a tough, tough question. I mean, for me, I feel do they really protect us if they're showing up three, four days later, it's going to be packed four days later? I don't really think that makes sense. Keep it open.

We're not going to be in a bubble. We're going to be roaming around New York City. We're responsible for our own health.

I don't see how that's really making sense. If you're going to do full bubble, nobody, or just leave it completely open. All this kind of half and half things, certain rules for certain people, I don't think it makes sense in general.

So, yeah, that's pretty much my answer. I think people should be allowed in quallies. I think it's a huge opportunity for families who can't spend a bunch on tickets, have an opportunity to watch top guys practice and the future of the sport.

