

Citi Open

Wednesday, August 4, 2021
Washington D.C.

Reilly Opelka

Press Conference



R. OPELKA/D. Galan

7-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What did you do as far as changing your game up today after he beat Tommy?

REILLY OPELKA: I mean, I don't really ever change my game up, but I did get to see some things that he did. He played a great match against Tommy. Obviously everyone knew he was good. That match really showed me a lot. I was pretty impressed with him.

Today I thought he was impressive. He easily could have won the first set. He's good. I think he's serving well. He's got a really, really good backhand. He hit some great passing shots on me today. He's a good athlete.

Yeah, I was impressed with him today. But it wasn't a surprise. I'm glad I watched him play Tommy because I saw he was the real deal, a top-50 level guy if not higher.

Q. How important is it for you to get your serve rolling in these matches? What sort of confidence do you get with the rest of your game when it is?

REILLY OPELKA: I didn't serve my best today, especially in the second set. I think the number was really low. I did a good job of mixing up the speed of my second serve, mixing up the depth of it. I played real well from the baseline. I hit my forehand great, volleyed well. I had a lot of things going in my favor just outside my serve today which made it more difficult for him to break me.

But I think my first-serve percentage needs to increase, especially my next match against a good returner like John Millman.

Q. When you're playing someone who clearly wants to hit as many forehands as possible, what are you thinking on the baseline?

REILLY OPELKA: With Galan?

Q. Yes.

REILLY OPELKA: I think he has a better backhand. Better for him to be hitting forehands against me. I think his backhand is his money shot. He's more solid there. He absorbs pace better there.

I didn't do a great job offensively on my backhand. I sliced well, but I didn't follow up well. Yeah, I think I had no worry of him hitting a forehand as opposed to a backhand. I think that was actually the plan.

Q. The USTA announced that US Open qualifying will be closed to the public. The main draw is at 100% capacity. They say they're doing that to protect you. How does that make you feel?

REILLY OPELKA: It's interesting. I don't want to bite the hand that feeds me, you know? They've been great to me. The USTA has been great to me. That's all funded by the US Open.

There's flaws in everything. They've been great to me. Martin Blackman and Kent Kinnear, my coach Jay Berger, even Pat McEnroe has been beyond generous to me. There's nothing negative I can say because they've changed my life for the better.

Q. Over the last couple months, do you feel you've improved a lot? Are you playing much better forehand, backhand, return, serving?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, I think I've improved. I think I've improved my forehand a lot the last couple months. I think it's something that we made adjustment on, a pretty big technical adjustment. I think it's going to take time, but I think it's already shown a lot of improvements. I think that will change a lot of things with my game.

I think I got to 32 in the world in 2019 without a good forehand, if I'm being honest. We've made a lot of adjustments. It's exciting for me to know that if I stay the path, I got ranked pretty high with a shot that can be a lot



better.

I really think I can have one of the best forehands in the world. I wished I made the adjustment earlier on in my career. Better late than never.

I'm excited, if anything, to know I can climb higher. It's exciting for me to know. I got to 30 something in the world with a shot, with a weakness, that should be a strength in men's tennis.

Q. What about the backhand?

REILLY OPELKA: I mean, I'm still working on it. My backhand, technically I don't think there's too much wrong. Just some little things I can do. I think it will get better over time. I'm still improving, getting stronger. I think my backhand is pretty good.

Q. (Question about playing Rafa in Rome.)

REILLY OPELKA: I made the adjustment on my forehand in Rome.

Q. How was it when you were playing against Rafa? What were you thinking and what did you change?

REILLY OPELKA: I mean, doesn't change much. With my style of play, fortunately there's not much that I deviate from. There's some things to know. I mean, he's great. He's Rafa. He's great. He's the greatest. That's his court. My favorite player growing up. I dressed as him for Halloween twice. It's a cool to play a legend like him.

I wanted to go out there and win. I think a lot of these guys go out there, and it's, I don't know, to a certain degree obviously we all respect the hell out of him. Like I said, we grew up idolizing him. But I think to a certain extent, you see players losing to Rafa, Roger, Novak, they're getting a selfie with him on the court. I think you got to draw the line somewhere.

All due respect to Rafa. He is the greatest. He's my favorite player as a kid and will always be my favorite player. I went in trying to win, trying to test myself against the greatest.

Q. Taylor Fritz, I assume he's a good friend?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah.

Q. (Question about the Australian Open fifth set and being tired.)

REILLY OPELKA: I hit the wall in the start of the fifth set. I

ran out of gas.

Q. You were really tired?

REILLY OPELKA: Yup.

Q. What works for you guys? Is it the forehand, backhand, going in? You like him obviously.

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah. He's good, man. He's a good competitor. Nice guy. No weaknesses. He's got it all. He's got a lot going for him. He's got a good mindset. Yeah, there's not many flaws in his game.

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