

# Citi Open

Thursday, August 5, 2021

Washington D.C.

## Denis Kudla

### Press Conference



D. KUDLA/B. Nakashima

3-6, 7-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Quarterfinals for the second time. What's it feel like to be back in this situation again?**

DENIS KUDLA: Yeah, feels great. Playing well at home is I think every player's dream, for sure. Being in familiar territory here, knowing that I have done it before definitely helped me get through these matches. This is probably the most comfortable I have ever felt here. I don't feel like my nerves are through the roof. I feel like I'm playing good tennis.

Very comfortable being around my family and friends. It definitely means a lot, and I'm so happy I'm able to put on a good show for them.

**Q. How have these matches helped with your confidence overall?**

DENIS KUDLA: Yeah, I mean, confidence is pretty high right now ever since the grass court season. Kind of a little bit of a letdown from Newport, Los Cabos, Atlanta, but I'm glad I'm able to capitalize on the opportunity that I have right now.

The goal right now is to peak at the US Open, but I feel like I'm playing great tennis. If I can sustain this, stay healthy, that's the goal, I feel like good things can happen.

**Q. You talk about sort of the comfortability you have. Wondering if that comes as well with this stage in your career, experience, and how much of a factor that is, maybe a little veteran savviness for you?**

DENIS KUDLA: Yeah, I mean, I feel like all the talk, being a veteran or experience now, I'm starting to understand in my career where there are a lot of things I can look back on, see where I made my mistakes, see where I did well, what I did well.

Right now just being comfortable, I know I do well when I'm around my family and my friends, in kind of a low-key environment, not overly consumed with the tournament.

It's kept me pretty lighthearted. I can already put a bunch of pressure on myself naturally, and my friends and family are able to kind of take it off me and allow me to play well and swing free.

**Q. Jenson Brooksby just took out FAA. You played Brandon earlier today. Wondering if you can offer perspective what guys like that are going through. They are experiencing a lot of things for the first time in their careers, early 20s, checking off a lot of firsts. From your perspective, having been through that once upon a time, what are they going through right now?**

DENIS KUDLA: I mean, they are going through what feels like on your first field trip. It's awesome. They are going into these tournaments, don't have a lot of pressure, and if they do, they know better than I do, but I think they are both super confident, the spotlight is on them. They are being great players left and right, going on runs, showing that they belong in this new wave that's coming through.

I think it's open season for, you know, who wants to take the top 20, top 30 spots in the next four or five years once the top three kind of leave. I don't really think there is a dominant top 20, top 30 right now. I think a lot of guys can put themselves in there. I do think they believe. I think they have great support systems that are allowing them to believe.

You know, I broke top 100 when I was 19, and these guys, obviously with the rankings how tough it is to break top 100, I think they both should be 50, 60 in the world if the rankings were normal over the last year and a half.

But it's tough for guys looking in, as well. I mean, there is no really game plans on them. They haven't been around that long. I would say Nakashima has been around a little bit longer than Brooksby, but eventually it's going to be interesting to see how they back up Year 2, Year 3, Year 4.



I hope they enjoy the ride and enjoy the spot that they are in right now.

**Q. You played Brandon for the first time today. He's been having a really successful summer. What did you think of his game?**

DENIS KUDLA: Yeah, we practiced a bunch. Feels weird that that was the first time that we played. I feel like we practice every single week.

We are pretty close in the locker room, joke around all the time. He's a great player. I think he's got a spot in the top 30, top 20 absolutely in his future.

I don't think he's that flashy so he's going to be a slow riser. I think he is going to be under the radar, just his demeanor and how he is, which I think will help him.

I wouldn't be surprised if somehow down the road, no one really talks about him, he sneaks into the top 10. I think he's got a lot of talent.

I'm playing really well right now. His legs kind of gave out at the end. He's played so many matches back to back to back to back and kind of a new territory, so the stress that comes along with that isn't easy to deal with. He doesn't know how his body is going to react because he doesn't done this before, but he's handling it well.

Again, he's got a great coach, support system around him that's going to keep him leveled. I don't think this will be the last time we play. I know he's going to be coming for me. He's going to be aiming for my head. So I look forward to the battle and trying to keep the young guys in their place.

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