

Citi Open

Thursday, August 5, 2021

Washington D.C.

Mackenzie McDonald

Press Conference



M. McDONALD/I. Ivashka

6-4, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I don't think we have talked to you since two matches ago, so what's been going so well for you this week, do you think?

MACKENZIE McDONALD: Yeah, I mean, I have just been taking it match by match. Yeah, I mean, each match has been kind of different. I think I played a little bit better today than I did yesterday. I mean, that's all I can do, go match by match and then focus for tomorrow.

Q. I know Ilya beat you twice during the clay court season. What was different about today's match that allowed you to get over the hump?

MACKENZIE McDONALD: Clay has never been my thing, so I didn't really have a very good clay season for myself, this last one. Playing him on the clay honestly was really tough. I'd say out of all the matches I was playing, he really gave me a tough time.

I break so many guys, but I didn't break him one time in those two matches I played him. He was ripping serves, ripping the ball, and couldn't beat him from the ground or move around. I felt like he was just with more control.

On the hard court, little faster, my ball skids a little bit more. He can't crack it. Then I can run. I return so much better than on clay because I can go after a little more. I broke him three times today. That's the difference.

Q. You mentioned in your postmatch press conference you feel confident you can break the majority of players on the ATP Tour. On the flip side of that, you're winning 71% of your first-serve points. That's the highest number of your career. What's working better for you on your serve this year than perhaps wasn't in the past?

MACKENZIE McDONALD: I don't even know where that stands. Is 71% high?

Q. It's pretty good, pretty solid. If you were a top 50 player it would rank 30th amongst top 50.

MACKENZIE McDONALD: That's pretty good. I don't know. I feel like on tour it's like, okay, the men's game, you just got to hold. I don't know. I get a little insecure when I'm not holding all the time sometimes. I think maybe knowing that stat might help it.

I think I'm just serving pretty simple. I think I have a pretty simple motion. The more simple I keep it, the better I actually serve. If I'm trying too hard, I actually don't do as well. Starting with the offseason, we worked on it a little bit. I served really well in Australia. From then on it's been a little up-and-down. I'd say I served really well today, but yesterday I didn't serve my best.

Yeah, I'll keep trying to climb from 71.

Q. It wasn't the biggest crowd, but it was a very locked-in crowd towards you. I notice some familiar faces. I know you're traveling with Ryan Shane a bit this week. You have your coach, you've got Chanel (phonetic) here as well. What are your thoughts on this D.C. community? How comfortable have you been throughout the week?

MACKENZIE McDONALD: It's actually been nice. I have some fans cheering for me, had some guys cheering for me today. I'm not really the most, I don't know, just, like, I don't know, like animated on court.

So for me, I have my probably biggest crowd I have traveled with my coach and his girlfriend, and Chanel (phonetic) is on the road with me, which is really nice. Ryan lives locally, he's one of my best friends.

It's really nice to have him and see him around. I don't get to see him a lot. We talk a ton so it's been nice seeing him.

Q. Tomorrow you will play against Denis Kudla. Do you like to play against compatriots, or do you prefer



other rivals?

MACKENZIE McDONALD: Yeah, I have been successful against Kudla before. You know, he's from here, so he might be a favorite which might actually help me being a little bit of the underdog against him, but I have matched up well against him. So I like that.

Q. You said that you're traveling with Ryan or he's just at this...

MACKENZIE McDONALD: No, he is just -- he lives here. He's not traveling with me.

Q. Are you guys friends from back in college when he was playing at UVA? What's your relationship? How did you get to know each other?

MACKENZIE McDONALD: Actually it's kind of funny. I didn't really know him at all. I played him my freshman year at UCLA against UVA. Crazy dual match. Beat him 5 and 5. That summer we were both playing Binghamton challenger, ended up rooming together and hanging out and kicked it off, best friends from the start.

We're just into the same stuff and do stupid things. We have kept in contact since then. He was my only loss my junior year in college at UVA, and, you know, we just always kept in touch. I have gone, when I was having a tough time over the pandemic I went to Sarasota to see him and spent like a week with him. He's come to the Bay area too, stayed at my house and stuff. We are just tight. We're good buddies. I don't know. We mesh well.

Q. What year was that where you guys were rooming together?

MACKENZIE McDONALD: I think the summer of my -- just doing a tournament summer of my, like after my freshman year.

Q. Is he like helping you like hit like during the week, or...

MACKENZIE McDONALD: No, no, we're not hitting or anything. We literally are just like best friends. We hang out. Actually, we haven't gone to dinner yet or anything. He's been working during the day. I have seen him only a little bit, but we FaceTime and stuff.

I have stayed at his house too when I was playing quallies here one year as well.

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