

# Citi Open

Saturday, August 7, 2021

Washington D.C.

## Mackenzie McDonald

### Press Conference



M. McDONALD/K. Nishikori

6-4, 3-6, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Could you just speak in broad strokes about what it took from you physically and mentally to gut out that match and stay aggressive against a past champion?**

MACKENZIE McDONALD: Yeah, it was a pretty tough match today. I feel like physically it was tough. I mean, the time on the match kind of says it, for sure. Physically, especially in the third, it was getting -- I could tell both of us were digging deep in there.

Yeah, mentally I think I just hung in there really well. You know, I made good decisions towards the end. I think going for my shots at the end there was big. You know, I mean, yeah, it paid off.

**Q. You have had a great tournament. What is it like for you to beat a player in such an incredible match that you have spoken admirably about up to and including last night's press conference?**

MACKENZIE McDONALD: Yeah, I mean, I think I learned from my experience last time. You know, I wasn't ready to play him. I was playing Kei more so than the ball last time. This time I say experience, the hard work I have put in, and, yeah, just my experiences this whole year.

Getting belief again after my injury with Aussie Open, qualifying for both slams, French, Wimby, having to climb those steps in the toughest way with the COVID and the rankings that I was facing, only having points from nine months compared to people with three years or two-and-a-half years of points.

It was tough, and I feel like it's come to it this week. I feel like I put it all together a little bit this week. You never know when it's going to click, and I just, yeah, for me it's this week so far.

**Q. I wanted to ask you what it means to you to get to an ATP final for the first time.**

MACKENZIE McDONALD: Yeah, it means a lot. My biggest goal, results-wise, I wrote down, was win a 250 and ATP title. This is one step closer that I haven't been to that.

Yeah, it means a lot. I'm trying to downplay, or I guess downplay a little bit, try to keep my cool. I guess that's what's really helping me, not make the moments too big, getting too high or too low, staying focused, knowing the values behind it.

**Q. You started by saying that you had written down goals. Have you written down those goals somewhere? Could you tell us more about that, if that's something you have checked somewhere?**

MACKENZIE McDONALD: Yeah, I mean, I have always written down my goals since I was a junior, even in college. Basically achieved all of them so far. Even through college, like, I wrote I want to get top 500 when I was in college, wrote down I want to win, wrote down I want it to make it to national indoors freshman year, and I did all that. As a pro I have my stepping stones I have always put for myself.

This year, I wanted to win a 250, I want to get back inside -- I want to get top 100, inside the top 50. Goals, they are always changing. I want to write them down, talk with your team about them. Yeah, that's something I have always done.

**Q. I know you're trying to look forward, but going back two years ago, could you paint the picture where you would have been, like what state you were in? Summer 2019, this time of year when this tournament was last played, where you would have been?**

MACKENZIE McDONALD: No. Honestly, it was a really painful time, really super tough. It was really rough. I had no idea what to expect. I didn't know. I was away from family, too. I was lucky. My girlfriend's father was able to spend time with me, he's retired, and helped me. I couldn't



walk and drive myself and do anything.

I had apartment on the third floor and no elevator. It was pretty shitty. So, yeah, I didn't know where I was going to be two years later. Like I said, I have always worked hard, always put in the work. A little bit older, too, and it's helping.

**Q. When would that belief have changed? Because I imagine two years ago this had to have felt very far away. You could write down goals. When did it go from writing the goals to feeling like, Okay, we're on the right track here?**

MACKENZIE McDONALD: I mean, I was healthy. 2020 for me the start was understanding my body. That first three months I was playing pretty bad tennis but I was healthy again, moving well.

COVID actually gave me time to play tennis and get back to like feeling like finding my game and stuff, because it takes time after an injury.

And then as soon as tennis started again. I was a little bit lucky, I had some PRs left, which also meant I could make some money too. Hired my own coach. Put in a really good offseason in December, and I was ready for the year.

I didn't have, you know -- if I didn't make fourth-round Aussie, honestly I would still be playing challengers. I wouldn't have the opportunity. I really dug deep. Did ten weeks in a row in Europe, and, yeah, like I said earlier, you never know when those opportunities are going to arise. Kind of about showing up each day and you're going to have bad days too. Yeah.

**Q. When you said two years ago you were away from your family, your girlfriend's father helped you, where was that? Where were you?**

MACKENZIE McDONALD: I was in Orlando. I got surgery up in Pensacola, Andrews Institute. They did an unbelievable job. Went back to USTA. Laid down flat in the car. My mom drove me back. Went to my apartment. Didn't leave for like three weeks.

I could start going to USTA, which was five miles away from my apartment. And I was stuck there until right before the US Open. Then I was doing commentating there, commentating, watching tennis at Orlando. I did that, five classes at UCLA and stuff. Yeah.

**Q. Curious, moving forward, looking to tomorrow's final, you match up with a guy, Jannik Sinner, one of the most talented young players on tour. You have**

**watched his game since he won the NextGen Finals in Milan a few years ago. Preparation-wise, what are you going to do to get over the final hump?**

MACKENZIE McDONALD: My coach and I will watch some film. I'm going to take care of my body and eat well and get some sleep, maybe I'll watch some with him tomorrow morning and we will discuss it and play the match.

**Q. Having watched a lot of you over the years, you're not always the most outwardly emotional guy. There was a big roar at the end of the match today when you got that match point over the finish line. Where did that roar come from? What did that moment mean to you?**

MACKENZIE McDONALD: Yeah, I mean, honestly I still can't believe it was over. I just let it all out. I slapped those forehands and, yeah, just let it all out and screamed loud.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports