

Citi Open

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Washington D.C.

Frances Tiafoe

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: How does it feel to be in Washington?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, no, this is a week I circle in every year. Super excited to be back here. I've been in some good rhythm getting to this event, so I'm super excited to play at home. Well-done event. Have the girls back here. Great energy around the grounds. I'm excited to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Coming back home, is it more difficult or less difficult to be able to play here in your hometown? How important is it now that crowds are flocking back to tennis tournaments, play in front of an audience again?

FRANCES TIAFOE: The crowd perspective is what I absolutely love. I think last year here was one of the, like, the first time we played in packed arenas. Loved it.

Yeah, I'm such a huge fan of playing at home. I just love playing at home. It's good and band. Obviously everyone roots for you, but everyone is wanting your time. Kind of managing that.

Everyone here, the owner of the event is a great friend of mine, Mark Ein. I love the guy. It's good to be back. Everyone wants me to do so well. I know everyone from credential people to media people, everyone. I just want to put on a show and go deep.

This year I'm really looking forward to it.

Q. There are many people of all ages watching you play, learning, how you demonstrate yourself on court. How do you ensure you display good sportsmanship on and off the court?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I think I'm always a pretty good sport on the court. Everyone has their moments where you act out. I think for the most part I'm always a pretty good sport.

You're a person first and an athlete second, right? I mean, who you are as an individual I think matters a lot and carries over a lot. I think a lot more people are going to remember you for that rather than what you do with the racquet in your hands. I always have that in the back of my mind. Whatever happens on the court is fine, but who Frances Tiafoe is as a person always remains.

But yeah, I just go out there and try as hard as I can. I hope people pay their hard-earned money and enjoy the tennis I'm bringing out. After that it is what it is.

Q. You talk about some of those distractions coming home. Good problem to have. At this stage in your career, do you feel better equipped to handle that? Do you feel better equipped to potentially make that elusive deep run here?

FRANCES TIAFOE: For sure. I think this is a good year for me. I'm playing great tennis. Why not? Yeah, I mean, I definitely handle it better. 'Do not disturb' is definitely in play during the week.

But, yeah, I have a tight circle. Obviously a lot of people around, having people managing certain things. Yeah, I like the conditions here. I practice on this court a lot, on center court here a lot. The crowd is going to be with me. I'm going to get them behind me. It's going to be a good week.

Q. I saw you were watching Hailey's match a little bit. What did you make of that?

FRANCES TIAFOE: It was tough. She's coming back from injury. Pegula is obviously a great opponent. It was tough. Obviously Pegula is a great friend of mine, top 10 in the world, playing some of the best tennis of her life. It was always going to be a tough contest.

I just had to go out there and show love, show that I'm here with her. She's got a lot of work to do.

Q. You're from here. Hailey from being around the area, what does it mean, having two big stars from D.C. playing in the Open?



FRANCES TIAFOE: For sure. For sure. I mean, I think she's got a great potential. She can do a lot of great things. But, yeah, everyone's journey is going to be a little different. I think it's going to take her a little time to really start breaking through. She definitely has the game. I just hope she puts it all together.

Q. It's good to see you out at Hailey's match. But we like to ask you something that is not about tennis. Who are you listening to these days? Did you peep the new Beyonce? If so, what did you think?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I did peep the new Beyonce a little bit. It's different. The same with the new Drake: a lot of elevator kind of music. I don't know how I feel about it honestly. I mean, it's definitely an acquired taste I feel like.

But to be honest with you, I'm more on the Afro beats vibe, more Burna Boy. Kind of a Burna Boy summer for me, yeah.

Q. Coming off the semifinal in Atlanta this past week, round four at Wimbledon, what is clicking about your game?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, I'm serving much better. I'm in a better place mentally. I'm finally getting rhythm again. Obviously end of last year I started playing some great tennis from, like, Wimbledon on, second part of last year. Early in the year I had an injury. Struggling to find rhythm, playing great tennis. I just wanted to get back to that level so fast. Kind of get stuck to the process.

Now honestly I'm happy where I'm at, competing, just enjoy it again, not really try to force the issue right now, let something great happen right now. It's going to happen when it happens. It's starting to make sense again.

Right at the perfect time, hard court summer, with the US Open on the way, with the huge tournament right in front of me. I'm excited.

Q. You trained with Andrew Fenty for some time now. What can you say about how his skills have progressed this summer? He retired during his qualifying match. Did you have an opportunity to speak with him after that?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, no, I haven't spoke to him. I hurt to see him retire obviously. Obviously something had to be hurting. He wouldn't just retire in D.C. just to retire, right? Definitely do need to speak to him.

Yeah, I mean, it's tough. I mean, obviously he wanted to

do better. I mean, I think he's playing some great tennis. We practiced a lot going into this event. He was working really hard. I was super impressed. He was going on long runs and stuff like that. He really wanted it, was super motivated. Obviously he's not happy with the result.

But he's young. He's got some time. I like his game and I like his approach. But yeah, I mean, these guys, the biggest thing is for them to believe. I think they're a lot further than what they really are. I think belief is a huge factor. Doesn't really matter people around you, but it more matters if you believe in yourself.

Q. You mentioned over the years one of the things you've strived for is to be more consistent. Deep run one week, an early exit the following. Do you feel you've handled that better? If so, what's the next thing that's a priority?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, consistency definitely has been better. Again, I definitely feel like I'm getting in a better rhythm in my game. I feel like I'm getting more consistent in playing, like you're seeing my name go longer in draws a lot more readily now. Yeah, me sitting around my career high. I think things are going well.

But, yeah, I mean, next kind of steps? Tournaments like these. I want to be on Sunday holding the trophy. Grand Slams, make second weeks, make it a more normality. Yeah, why not even deeper?

I got big aspirations. But I think my game is there. I think I'm there physically. I'm just day by day with it.

Q. Silly question. What did you think of Jenson Brooksby stealing your celebration last week in your semifinal match in Atlanta, the handshake after?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I'll see y'all later, man (laughter).

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