

Mubadala Citi DC Open

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Washington D.C.

Christopher Eubanks

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Welcome to D.C. You were in Atlanta last week for your hometown event. Any particular pressures or is it any different playing in your hometown event? Obviously, Frances is playing here and then playing at another event in the States.

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: I think that the support, it's a lot different. I see a lot more people that I grew up with. I see a lot more people I played junior tournaments with, their parents, and they want to stop and say hello, which is kind of, it's kind of nostalgic, I would say, in some ways when you see some familiar faces you haven't seen in a while.

The support that you receive obviously is going to be great in your hometown. I think Frances has experienced that. I got the chance to experience that this week in Atlanta. It's always kind of been there. Not quite how it was last week. I think last week was a little bit different.

But yeah, it's something that hopefully I become more accustomed to and can just kind of get acclimated to just because now things are a little bit different than they have been.

Q. What has changed confidence-wise since Wimbledon? Do you see possibilities now that you didn't see before that?

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: I don't think anything since Wimbledon. I don't think there is anything of like Wimbledon happened and then now there is maybe an added level of confidence. I wouldn't say that. I think the confidence kind of started to grow a little bit before then.

I think Miami obviously helped and Mallorca helped a lot. I think those are the weeks that really kind of solidified like, Okay, now I'm starting to be a little bit more consistent at the tour level and my approach hasn't been so much predicated on winning and losing.

It's kind of been taking care of all the other areas and then

when I go on court, we just go out there and see what happens to some degree. Obviously I'm out there, I'm trying to win. I go with the intention of winning, but I think in previous years, if I won, good. If I lost, bad.

That was kind of how I looked at myself, whereas now, it's like, hey, did I do all the things I was supposed to do before the match, in training weeks before, in rest, in recovery, in diet? If I did all that and go on court and I lose, I can walk off the court and hang my head high and it won't really affect my confidence.

I think that's probably the biggest thing now is like I don't let winning and losing affect my confidence as much, but I allow whether or not I did the stuff leading into the match to affect my confidence.

Q. Wondering what the post-Wimbledon celebrations were like. How much time off did you have?

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: I didn't do a thing. I got home. I got back, I believe I lost on Wednesday, got back on Friday. I didn't do anything Friday, Saturday, Sunday. Monday I got back in the gym, Tuesday I got back in the gym, and Wednesday I got back on court.

I just wanted to chill. I just wanted to kind of go back and go grocery shopping and I had some errands to run at home and stuff like that. I hadn't really had a time where I just kind of enjoyed it. Maybe it will come. Maybe not. I don't really like to party like that anyway.

If I do it, it's mostly for my friends to have a good time. I'm just kind of like, Yeah, let's do it. But no, not anything crazy.

Q. You have moved up so quickly in the rankings, a new echelon. You have a bye here. Different sort of vantage point for being on the tour. Is there anything that surprised you about life in this sort of range of the ranking? Is there any sort of even first-world problems? Are there things tougher that...

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: You're trying to make me sound like a complainer (smiling).



Q. I'm offering you an opportunity if you want. You don't have to.

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: I don't think I have lived in it long enough to experience it. I think obviously the media obligations have been a lot different since Wimbledon. But again, as long as it doesn't get in the way of my tennis, it's not a bad thing.

It's like we devote obviously like the time in the gym, the time on court, so roughly four hours-ish, maybe five at tournament, depending, to my tennis. Yeah, I can do an hour of media. Like it's not that big of a deal.

But again, this is just like my third time doing it so we'll see how, if this thing continues and it will be like Day 5 of the Open and I have to do stuff, We'll see how I feel then, but right now everything has been fine.

Q. Yeah, there was definitely a swarm of fans as you were getting off the practice court. Can you just talk about kind of what that experience has been like especially since your success at Wimbledon this year?

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: It's a lot different. It's a lot different. Yeah, more people wanting autographs, more people wanting pictures. I have had to learn, I think, how to say no, which is a lot tougher now, because in the past, maybe I come off the court maybe four, five kids want a picture and I can kind of go on about my day. It's not really a need to say no.

But now it's like, No, guys, I have a schedule. I can't stick around 30 minutes to sign, so I sign a few and you kind of keep going. I'm always apologizing, saying, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. That's probably the biggest thing in terms of like fan interactions and stuff. It's been very, very different.

Q. I imagine when you're doing commentary for Tennis Channel, one of the benefits is you get to watch a lot of matches. Is there anything you learned about why players win or lose on this level from watching all those matches and commenting on it?

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: Yeah, there are certainly different things that you can pick up from different players. For instance, at the end of last year I caught the, I think, Basel and Vienna week and that was when Felix Auger-Aliassime went on a crazy run winning three tournaments in a row.

One of the things I noticed is winners and unforced error ratio was extremely like lopsided. He had high winners, low unforced errors. He didn't miss very many balls wide

when he got into baseline exchanges. He made big first serves on big points when he needed to.

As I'm talking through that with the viewer, I'm also saying to myself, like, all right, he's making his first serves when he needs to, not missing that many balls wide. He's still playing aggressive, but he's managing the winners and unforced error account.

I went from calling that match to playing in Charlottesville, Knoxville, and Champaign, three challengers where I went final, final, semi. I think that in my head the whole week I was telling my coach, I'm not missing balls wide. Felix wasn't missing balls wide, I'm not missing balls wide.

So little things like that. I go through phases. I find different things from different players, but that was one that really stuck out of just managing the errors and understanding, all right, You can miss a ball in the net, you can miss it long, or you can miss it wide.

Take out one them. For me, taking out wide during that stretch was really important, so that's just like one example. But then it kind of changes. As the year has gone on, I have found other little things I tried to implement in my game.

Q. I was noticing practicing on Court 4 and Court 5 this morning, there is definitely a change in the colorscape.

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: I was wondering how you were remember going to say it.

Q. It was noticeable and I noticed you guys were commenting on it as well. My question is what impact, if any, does the fact there are so many Black male players in America rising up on you, and also just for tennis in general?

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: I think it's great. I think it's great for the sport. I think the women's side has seen that for a while.

I think obviously a lot of that comes from Venus and Serena's dominance for so many years, that little Black girls can look on TV and see someone that looks like them excelling. It naturally feeds them right into the sport. It makes total sense.

On the men's side we've had Roger, Rafa, Novak, Murray. We haven't had, outside of Blake getting up to 4 in the world. We had Mal Washington, Bryan Shelton, DY got up there, top 40 for a while, Rodney Harmon, but we hadn't had -- I think it's been a while since we have had that type

of group so it's really cool, really cool moment to be on that court and look across and Ben, and then look to my left and see Frances and Michael, because we've all been good friends for years.

You see Michael's dad over there, Tony Mmoh, who is a professional. You see Bryan Shelton who's over there. It's like, Man, this is really, really cool. I think that's why you saw us making sure we got a picture of it just to kind of remember that moment.

Hopefully it has a great impact. We can get more young Black boys into the sport right now. I think for years obviously basketball and football and taken, especially growing up in Atlanta I saw it firsthand, nobody really wanted to play tennis. You went to basketball or football. Now I think hopefully it's starting to change, and we are hoping just to be a small part of that change.

THE MODERATOR: This is Xander from Sports Illustrated Kids. He has a question.

Q. You have had notable victories against top high-seed opponents in the past. How do you maintain self-belief and confidence in your abilities, especially when facing top-seed opponents in tournaments like the Citi Open?

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: That's a very good question. I think that for me the confidence comes from the preparation more so than just how I'm feeling on that day, and I think that's a change for me.

I think earlier in my career, it was more so predicated on whether or not I was winning or losing, leading into it to determine how confident I would be. Now it's more about have I prepared properly, did I get enough sleep, did I spend enough time on the practice court as I needed to, get my body taken care of as much as I needed to?

You walk on the court, one or two things is going to happen. You're either going to win or you're going to lose. Some of that is out of control, because you can play somebody who just plays too good. I had to learn. I couldn't allow my confidence to suffer based on winning or losing. It was more so on the preparation side.

If I walk on the court and I feel like I prepared properly and it doesn't go my way, I think I'm a lot better equipped to handle that now than I did years ago because I felt like it was the worst thing in the world.

That's just how I do it. I try to prepare properly and let the rest take care of itself.

Q. Two years ago, you and Frances played I believe opening night US Open, Court 17, night match. You were ranked in the low 200s. He was about 50, 51. Can you share with us what you remember about that evening? Do you feel that you and Frances have developed a great rivalry going forward?

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: I wouldn't say that. I wouldn't go that far with it. We have played twice. We played obviously last year, And then obviously the US Open in 2021. I think both players have got to win at least one for it to become a rivalry. Right now he's up 2-0, so I wouldn't say it's a rivalry at all.

But I do see it as like somewhat a friendly competition continuing to go push each other. What I remember about that match, I'm glad you asked about it, was we had a little bit of I would say an icy handshake afterwards which I didn't view it as icy in the moment and neither did he, but after the match my phone was blowing up saying, Is everything okay? You guys didn't shake hands.

I even talked to Frances about it. I said, Man, I was down a break in the fourth. I broke back and started feeling confident and he broke me right back and served out the match.

So when we get to the net, if you know Frances, you know he's going to want to talk a long time. And at that point I wasn't trying to hear it. So we get to the net, we shake hands, and I'll never forget his words to me were, Chris, you're top 100, Bro, you're top 100, you're top 100.

He said it about three times. After the fourth time I got the message, so I decided to turn and walk, and he was still holding on to my hand so when you look at it, I'm looking at him and I'm nodding and then I said, All right, and I turn, but he's still holding onto it. So it looks like I kind of blew him off, but that's not what it was.

We practiced, I think, on court side by side the next day, and he laughed about it. He says, Oh, you gonna give me a good handshake today? It was all love. That's one thing I never actually said what happened, but one thing I'll never forget about that match was the handshake.

I'm pretty sure if you ask him, What do you remember about the match of 2021, he'll probably say the exact same thing.

Yeah, see what he says. See if he like, Do you remember anything specific about your match with Chris 2021? Let's see if he says the same thing.

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