

Mubadala Citi DC Open

Sunday, July 30, 2023

Washington D.C.

Frances Tiafoe

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Frances, it's always good to be back playing in front of your home crowd. How do you feel this time?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, super excited to be here. Obviously everyone knows what this tournament means to me, so it's just an honor to be here and compete in front of everybody. Everyone's super excited to have me here this year. I'm just looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What do you think of the state of tennis in Washington, D.C., now compared to when you were growing up, and what more could it do to continue growing here?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, I think tennis is great. Obviously Clervie just won Wimbledon. She's from here. I don't think many people know that. What a hell of a player she is and will become.

You know, I mean, I think Hailey Baptiste can be very good. I think Robin Montgomery can be really good. I think there's going to be a lot of great players from the area, very talented players.

Obviously with myself, it brings tennis to D.C. which is great, and I think the more people want to play and want to get into the game, so we'll see.

Q. Chris was just talking about the picture that you took with Ben Shelton and Bryan and maybe some dads out there. What does that mean to you? You get along with everybody. Does it make a difference on tour to have more American kids who look like you?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, it was funny. I was just out there saying, Yeah, we had three Black guys out here and Ben (smiling). It was hilarious.

We all get along great. You know what I mean? It's all great relationships. To see those guys play so well. You know, Mmoh has been having great year. He had some

injuries, but he had some great wins.

Beating Felix at Wimbledon, beating Zverev at Aussie Open, Ben obviously his run at Aussie Open. Chris playing really well.

Yeah, I mean, it's a domino effect. These guys see me do certain things and they're coming forward. And it's great. I hope more and more of us keep playing well.

Q. In your sort of career bucket list of things you want to do in your career, how high is winning this tournament? I know it's a 500, but...

FRANCES TIAFOE: It's irrelevant. Even if it was a 250, honestly. I mean, this is the reason, this tournament is one of the reasons why I play pro tennis. Being this close to fans. You see a lot of fans here so up close and personal with the players.

You know, it's a 500, we like great players. To have my name around the stadium, I mean, I used to sneak into this thing as a kid. Now, you know, I just really want to win this event. Outside of winning slams and maybe Masters Series, this is definitely up there.

It would be a very emotional day, I think it would be a great day for the city of D.C. and Mark Ein, I think he'd love it too.

THE MODERATOR: This is Xander with Sports Illustrated Kids.

Q. As a home-grown talent, you have a strong fan base in D.C. How does the support from the loyal fans affect your play on the game?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Great question, little man. Stuttered a little bit. You'll get more confident with it (smiling).

No, no, it's great, man. Obviously when I was younger, it was tough. I feel like I really wanted to perform, and I would get very stressed out, but now I look forward to it. It's circled in on my calendar and something I just really want to do and compete. Ultimately excited these guys get to see me. They only get to see me once a year, people I



grew up, super close with. It makes me happy and excited to play.

Q. You talk about the excitement and the pressure of being here at your home court. Is there an added pressure this year considering how you went out at Wimbledon? You had said yourself you were not happy with the way you had played. Is there a little bit more pressure here on your home court?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I mean, this year for sure. Everyone's expecting, you know, a big run this year for sure. Obviously last year and then a really tough loss with Kygs. Yeah, definitely expecting a very good run. At the end of the day, man, everyone is happy. It's going to be an amped crowd. I feel like I'm going to rise to the occasion.

Q. What did you notice about Chris' game as he was coming up that made you think he had a lot of potential? What has helped him turn the corner here a little bit?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I think it's belief, honestly. I think the biggest thing is belief. He's taking it much more serious, being much more professional. You know, he's doing all the little things.

I mean, all the little things create for big results. You know, the small changes create big results. I think he's really tapped in. I mean, he's always had a big serve, huge forehand. I mean, I played him in 2021 US Open.

I was like, man, this guy is for real. Unless you believe it, it doesn't really matter. Now he's believing it, and I hope he continues to do so. I don't think it's a fluke thing. I don't believe in flukes. I think if you do something at this level, the highest level, you can definitely repeat it. Hopefully this is the Chris Eubanks we get used to.

Q. You know about the background of this tournament. Now it's become the first ATP/WTA 500 combined event in the world. The promise of the tournament was to keep it at a park where everybody could have access. With all this expansion and all this growth and more money coming in, do you foresee a problem with losing contact with the heart of the tournament, the Capital tradition of the tournament?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I mean, yeah, obviously they are trying to do more and more with the event and get it better and better. Always trying to make it better and better. But I think ultimately, I mean, you want these kids to be near, you want these kids to be as close to great tennis as possible.

I think you have seen all these great players play this event, but I mean, I think Mark's going to do everything in his power to keep the tournament here and keep it accessible to everybody. As I said, I used to sneak in to this event. Same security guards that were back then are here, and we still laugh about it. You know, they're saying, Thank God I used to let you in back then.

Yeah, that's this event. I'm going to fight for that. That one kid could be me one day, you know. Why not?

Q. As you come here...

FRANCES TIAFOE: Howard, man, I saw you last week. Now you're here. Damn, Howard (smiling).

Q. Good to see you too (smiling). As you come here and New York and there's that high heat and humidity, is there anything particularly you have to do differently or that you change at all in your preparation in order to have your body ready for those conditions?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, stay my ass inside unless I have to be outside. Hydrate a lot. Eat well. Rest is very important.

Just be super low key. Don't exert any energy that's not for the court. It's very hot, very humid. You know, I sweat a lot. So if I don't need to be outside doing anything, you won't see me around.

Q. Chris was just in here, he was asked about your 2021 US Open match. He asked us to ask you what you remember most about the match because he wanted to see if it would match up with what he remembers most about that match.

FRANCES TIAFOE: Well, at the time, I remember him playing lights out and I was getting super pissed off. And then also when I was getting the crowd riled up and he was mocking me, I was getting super pissed off, but I don't know if he told you about the handshake at the end.

So it was pretty funny, because he's hyping the match up, he's like, I'm coming for you, whatever, blah, blah, blah. You know, for me, as soon as the match is over, it's all love, we shake hands.

As soon he shakes my hand, he's giving me these ones. I'm like, Hey, man, I'm trying to give him some good stuff like, You're playing great. He trying to hear none of it. He's already walking to the chair.

I don't know. What did he say?

Q. (Off mic.)

FRANCES TIAFOE: I told him he was a top-100 guy.

He lied about the four times. That's why I repeated it a couple times because he was walking away (smiling).

But, yeah, so when we played here in D.C. last year, he made sure to give me a good handshake. Yeah, hopefully I don't play him anytime soon.

Q. Congratulations on reaching the top 10. My question, now that you have reached being a top-10 player, how difficult is it to maintain a ranking such as that? What would you like to achieve going forward?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Well, A, I guess you and I are both about to find out how to maintain being in the top 10 because I have never done it before, so I guess we're about to find out.

Ultimately, obviously I want to stay in the top 10, I want to be 8, I want to be 7, 5, 1, obviously. But, I mean, flat-out truth, now if I'm 10, whether 10 or 5, I just want to win a slam at this point. I don't really care if I'm 3.

If I'm 3 in the world and never won a slam, that would be hard for me. I could have been 19 but I won a slam. That's how much winning a slam would mean to me. At this point now, cracking top 10 is great, a huge milestone for me and my family and I. Now it's about winning Wimbledon. If I do that, I don't know if you'll see me again (smiling).

No, I'm joking but it will be one hell of a day.

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