

Mubadala Citi DC Open

Tuesday, August 1, 2023

Washington D.C.

Michael Mmoh

Press Conference



M. MMOH/H. Hurkacz

6-3, 6-7, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Congratulations on the win. Can you kind of put in perspective where this one falls in the year? You have obviously had some really good highlights here and there. Where does this one kind of stack up?

MICHAEL MMOH: You know, it's tough to choose. You know, they're all, like, every win is almost like one of your children in a way (smiling).

But this one is definitely pretty special because it was on home soil. You know, my dad actually used to live out here in Maryland, so, you know, and I'm actually an all-D.C. fan. I support the Commanders, I support the Wizards. So to get one here in a place I like, you know, I call it second home in a way, it's pretty cool.

Q. Just watching it, it felt like it was going on forever and ever and ever. Did it feel like that from your point of view? It was kind of back and forth, but what are you telling yourself mentally when it goes to another tiebreak in the third?

MICHAEL MMOH: No, it was nuts. Once it went to a third-set breaker, I was honestly kind of happy about that, just because I was down three match points at 5-4 in the third. Like, I knew he was going to be feeling the pressure a little bit more than me at that point.

But to go to a third set, obviously that wasn't what I wanted. I had a match point in the second. Could have closed it out in straights. But, you know, he came up with an ace on that match point.

At the end of the day, you know, if I would have told myself before the match, you know, it's 5-All, 6-All in the third, would you take that chance or would you like your chances in that moment? You know, I would definitely like my chances. I just kept on telling myself that, that, you know,

I'm in the battle with one of the best players in the world, and, you know, just enjoy it.

Q. How much experience do you have coming from match points down and winning on tour level or on any level? Is it something that you have done before or many times before?

MICHAEL MMOH: Yeah. As of late, it's been happening quite a bit, actually. My Wimbledon first-round qualies, I was down two match points or maybe three. Then, you know, obviously ended up getting into main draw and beating Felix. None of that would have happened if I would have lost first round of qualies.

Then just last week I was playing Tennys Sandgren in Atlanta. I was down two match points as well and won that. Seems to be a little bit of a theme. Hopefully that continues, but at the same time hopefully I don't put myself in those positions that I have to squeeze out those type of matches. Definitely thankful to get this one.

Q. I'd like to follow up on that with you and ask if you could describe what your mindset is when you reach a match point? Your opponent has that chance right there to end things.

MICHAEL MMOH: Yeah.

Q. You know if you don't win that next point, you're done.

MICHAEL MMOH: Yeah.

Q. What is that like in the moment?

MICHAEL MMOH: Yeah, I mean, the more you think about that, the more likely you're probably going to lose that point and lose the match. I feel like you almost just gotta, the best you can, to almost pretend it's just another point.

Just, like, numb yourself to the moment and just focus on what you want to execute in that point and don't necessarily, like, think about, oh, if I miss this backhand, match is over. Because most likely you are going to miss



that backhand.

I definitely just try to, you know, clear my head and, like, have a pretty good idea of what I want to execute in that moment.

Luckily I came up with I think three first serves. That was something that, you know, I thought of going into those points. You know, I knew that if I had my first serve in those points, I like my chances. Yeah, I got all first three first serves and won all three points.

Q. On a separate topic, I wanted to ask you about the heat, the humidity that during this North American swing you all deal with, whether it's here, New York can be notoriously tough in that way. Is there anything that you do extra or differently than the rest of the year or other settings to prepare your body for those conditions?

MICHAEL MMOH: Yeah. You know, I played Wimbledon, and then I was actually signed up to play Newport, but I ended up not playing Newport just because I felt like I needed a good training block in Florida -- that's where I train -- to get used to the variables and get used to the hot and humid condition.

I felt like if I went to Newport, you know, going into Atlanta, you know, I just wouldn't have been prepared to deal with those type of circumstances.

So I would say, you know, just making sure that before I get into an event that is going to be hot and humid that I have been in that condition and I have been acclimating towards it.

That's the reason I didn't play Newport, and that's the reason I stayed home, because nothing's worse than Florida in the summer. You come here. This is a breeze compared to Florida in the summer.

Q. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think of all the players on tour, you might have had the most options of which country to represent. Was there a particular journey or was it always going to be USA for you?

MICHAEL MMOH: Yeah, I mean, like, I think it was probably always going to be the U.S. I consider myself an American. You know, my dad, you know, spent a lot of time out here.

You know, I'm pretty prideful to represent the U.S., but of course my mom is Irish. My dad is originally Nigerian. So it is a melting pot.

Then I also grew up in Saudi Arabia. I was born in Saudi Arabia. So like you said, technically could be representing any one of those. But at heart, I just feel more American.

Q. On that topic, how did your dad end up in Maryland and do you know where?

MICHAEL MMOH: So he used to play on tour. He was a professional tennis player. At one point he moved to Jamaica. He was training out there. Then towards the later end of his career, he met, you know, a woman that he ended up marrying and had some kids with. They moved out to D.C. because she was from D.C.

So, like, all my brothers and sisters, they actually grew up in D.C. My sister recently got married, and she got married in College Park. She graduated from University of Maryland. They are from D.C. throughout, and that's kind of like he started that family over here.

I wasn't really a part of that, of course, because I grew up in Saudi Arabia, but, you know, I do feel connected to the area just because my brothers and sisters lived there and also my dad lived here for a long time.

Q. What do you make of the Bradley Beal trade?

MICHAEL MMOH: Oh, yeah. I mean...

Q. You're actually a fan, so if you don't want, don't make any headlines.

MICHAEL MMOH: (Smiling.)

Q. Just out of curiosity, going back to the question about which country you'd represent, how many languages do you speak?

MICHAEL MMOH: I actually only speak one, only English. Yeah, I mean, I speak a little bit like words here and there with Arabic, but it's mainly English, yeah.

Q. There were a couple of the guys on Sunday were talking about this moment on the practice court where it was you, Eubanks, Tiafoe, and Shelton, plus your dad plus Ben's dad, and you guys took a picture together. They seemed to think it was a pretty cool, special moment. Can you talk about what that meant, four Black American players together on tour and your dad and Ben's dad being there too?

MICHAEL MMOH: It was amazing. I don't know if it was an accident or if the practice people did that by design, but it was really cool (smiling). It just shows how far African-American tennis is moving.

You know, now, obviously Frances, he's playing tonight. Kevin Durant is coming out to watch him. I think that type of thing is really going to help the game of tennis. You know, hopefully I can continue to follow in those footsteps.

Obviously Eubanks and Ben, you know, everyone is doing amazing. It would be really cool to see, you know, if we inspire a new generation of African-American players, especially on the men's side. Because obviously we saw with the female side, Serena, Venus did that. Now you've got Coco, you've got Sloane, you have so many people that they inspired.

It would be really cool to fast-forward 20 years from now and see a whole new crop of African-American males competing and doing their thing, and hopefully we continue to inspire them.

Q. You beat Zverev, you beat Felix, you beat Hurkacz today. All great wins over top players. Did you feel like you were playing the best matches that you have played all year and, like, elevated your game to beat those guys, or do you feel like your kind of normal game is good enough against the top players?

MICHAEL MMOH: Yeah, I mean, like obviously these guys are all top 20, but I have known all of them since I was probably, like, 10, 12 years old. So for me, you know, I really know them throughout and, you know, they know me pretty well. They know I can play.

To be honest, like, whenever I approach these matches, I just try to bring the best out of myself, but I don't try to play out of my shoes. You know, I do believe that I bring my game and I'm not just necessarily, like, going for winners left and right. Like, I'm playing within myself. I'm really trying to stack up my game against theirs.

You know, obviously the moment you feel the opportunity, and then sometimes that just elevates your game to another level, and I think that's what's been happening this year, but I wouldn't even say some of those matches were the best matches I have played even this year.

It just, like obviously mentally, I was really, really ready for the moment and really ready to capitalize on the opportunity.

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