

Mubadala Citi DC Open

Tuesday, August 1, 2023

Washington D.C.

Frances Tiafoe

Press Conference



F. TIAFOE/A. Karatsev

7-6, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Frances, you have played before in front of celebrities, sports and nonsports before. What did it mean to have KD watching you tonight?

FRANCES TIAFOE: It was dope, it was dope. We are both staying at the Four Seasons. I seen him. His agent Rich Kleiman told me he was going to be here on the weekend.

I seen KD, and I'm, like, Bro, I'm going to play Tuesday, Wednesday. I don't know how long you're staying, but it would be dope if you can come. He's, like, 100% we're going to make it happen. Rich Kleiman was saying they're coming. I was super pumped. A lot of rumors about it before the match.

But, I mean, Daniel Gafford came. KCP, who just won with Denver Nuggets. Some mixed exposure here tonight. It was a great atmosphere. Everyone in D.C. who is super excited, I got, like, 55 tickets, something crazy, friends and family.

It was just a great atmosphere. Everyone is going nuts. I have never filled that stadium before in my opening match, so I guess it's a testament to how I have been doing lately.

Q. That tiebreaker was crazy, the second one. I wanted to ask if you have ever had an ankle breaker before?

FRANCES TIAFOE: That was sick, especially doing that in front of KD. He loved that. That was super cool. It wasn't cool I lost, like, three straight points after that (smiling). That was a sweet shot, and it came at a good time.

Q. I wanted to ask you if you lost your focus at all because you were so excited about...

FRANCES TIAFOE: About that shot?

Q. About getting the ankle breaker, yeah.

FRANCES TIAFOE: No, not really. He played a good point. He had a great pass there the next point. He was getting on my serve. I went for it, went for a big second. So I didn't really lose focus but I thought I did a good job staying with it.

Q. As the No. 2 seed, sometimes in a tournament like this you might get eased in a little bit. You weren't eased in tonight. He gave you everything you could handle.

FRANCES TIAFOE: He's very good, very good.

Q. As far as the back-and-forth, what was that like and what does it do for you? You're in now, you're in the tournament.

FRANCES TIAFOE: No, it's great, it's great. It's something you need. It's great. He's very good. Just simple, point-blank.

He's made semis of slams, won 500s, made it in semis of Masters Series this year. He's very good. I played him in Paris, also tough.

Luckily I served well in some big moments and served well at the end of the match. He's, at his best, one of the best players in the world and he played very well today.

Q. That first set you struggled to get points on his serve, but in the tiebreak, that point at 4-3 you had those two smashes and charged the net a bit more to kind of take the game to him a little bit. Was that a conscious decision to start to play up a bit and then in that tiebreak which eventually helped you win it?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, seems like things make sense in tiebreaks for me. I don't know. I just try to be very instinctual. Whatever makes sense, add it to your points. Yeah, it was definitely my plan and it worked out at that point, so happy it worked out (smiling).

we all know what Coco does.

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Q. Ten years ago you would have been freaking out if someone told you you'd meet KD, and now he's talking about how much of an impact you're making on the community. You said it yourself how crazy it was out there. What does it say about your journey, how far you're come and what you have been able to accomplish that you're inspiring even the biggest stars like KD?

FRANCES TIAFOE: 100%, man. I mean, think about it. I was a kid who had an opportunity and dreamed massively big. Shouldn't be doing any of these things, honestly.

Sneaking into this event, telling my parents I was going to be a pro at a super young age, against all odds, wearing hand-me-down clothes, holes in my shoes, cargo shorts. Now I'm playing this tournament. People are here to see me. I'm packing it out.

Doubles was nuts yesterday. Packed it out today. Guys like KD and Caldwell-Pope and Gaff want to come see me play. I have just worked really hard over the years. I think it's come from a great place. I'm super humble about it. I'm humble they want to take the time out and come and watch me play.

Yeah, it's so impactful, and it's one of those things you want to keep these moments going. You want to make them be a normality, not just a once-in-a-lifetime thing.

Q. I'd love to hear your analysis of Hailey's performance today.

FRANCES TIAFOE: Massive.

Q. Hailey and Coco tomorrow.

FRANCES TIAFOE: Massive. Massive for her. Let's see if those lights are going to be too bright or if she steps up to the plate. These are the kind of matches she needs to win if she wants to take it to the next level.

It was a great match today. Beat a quality player, former No. 1 in the world, here in D.C. Everyone loves a great story. To be honest with you, I think she can beat Coco.

Will she? I guess we are going to find out. She's one of the best players in the world, Hailey. Super talented. It's all between the ears with her.

I'm super proud of her today. I gave her a huge hug. I gave her her props. But I want her to turn a page. Wash her hands with it and get ready for tomorrow, because she's got a tall order. Coco is an unbelievable player, and

