

Mubadala Citi DC Open

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Washington D.C.

Mark Ein

Press Conference



MARK EIN: Look, first of all, I just want to thank all of you guys for being part of the tournament this year. We're really proud of what we've built here and continue to build. We are coming off an amazing qualifying weekend, which was sold out. The energy around the grounds, I think we all see how much this community loves this event and loves pro tennis.

You guys are a really important part of this event. I also want to make it a very good experience for each of you.

Happy to answer any questions.

Q. Obviously sold out, things are going well, which makes it seem like maybe the Olympics aren't as big a challenge as it seems like they could be on paper. How much has that been affecting your running of the tournament? What have you done to overcome that possible hurdle?

MARK EIN: Yeah, I mean, it really has not been an issue at all. When we took over this event, roughly 20% of the tickets were sold to people who bought the whole tournament. It's now over 70%.

This is an event that people in Washington look forward to year in, year out. I think they trust and believe we're going to have great players come. They love the whole experience.

On the player side, obviously going against the Olympics is unique. On the other hand, there's a lot of tennis reasons, as you guys have heard, why players want to come. You've heard a lot of those reasons.

I heard Emma yesterday also saying, I love this city, I love this tournament. If it was a different one, maybe I would have made a different decision.

I feel like really good that this is a destination that players want to come to.

The end thing is having a combined event in such an intimate setting. I looked at the schedule today and

tomorrow. It's extraordinary the number of matches you'll find on our small third and fourth courts just because you have both tours, so many good players, and an intimate setting.

Q. Obviously Frances is pretty much a regular here. His eighth time. What's important for you as a tournament director about having someone like him here?

MARK EIN: I've known Frances since he was little kid. We talk all the time. I love him as a person. I also love his story. Obviously it's a great tennis story. It's a great D.C. story.

Having him every year means so much. He is our superstar in Washington, D.C. I know how much it means to him. He tells people all the time that after winning a Grand Slam, having his name in our stadium would probably mean more than anything else he can do. I love that.

But I'd also say it's not just Frances. It's Robin, Haley, Clervie. Really pleased we could give main drawn wild cards Robin to Clervie to let them compete here.

Even over qualifying weekend to have Drew Fenty almost pull up a great match. Having Thai-Son almost win. From qualifying through the main draw, there's a lot of kids who grew up with this tournament as a big part of their lives, who grew up coming to this, and now they're playing here.

All of those stories mean so much to us at the event. The ability to give them opportunities but showcase people who came here as kids and are now competing at the highest level. It's one of the many things that makes this so special for us.

Q. How important is it for you to make this week not just about tennis, but make it about entertainment, food, fun? What part of that pie is it for you?

MARK EIN: Yeah, I mean, I think that's at the core of what this tournament is since we've taken over. We've sold every ticket this week. That's four years, actually four and



a half years, because we sold the last bunch of sessions in 2019, which is pretty amazing.

There's a lot of people that I was with from around the tour who weren't from here over this weekend seeing 7,500 sold-out qualifying weekend. I think it's a love of tennis, but now much more it's about the whole event, and people come for the experience.

The beautiful thing about tennis, a tennis tournament, it's not just a one-, two-hour game or match. You can come for six, seven, eight, nine hours. If you do it, you have to have an amazing experience. You need to have great food, great drinks, great venues. We've been able to create that. I think that's one of the main reasons why the tournament is so popular.

Q. You're a fan of doubles. How important is it for you to keep doubles alive, popular, introduce doubles to people who may not really care about it?

MARK EIN: Yeah, that's a good topic for this year 'cause we have some things to talk about.

I'm a huge fan of doubles. I always find it ironic that I think 75% of what people play is doubles, then it doesn't get any love on TV, it doesn't get much love sometimes in the stands.

Some of the best moments of this week, of every week, are our great doubles matches on our grandstand court. I was talking to Genie Bouchard, we were reliving her incredible run in 2017 with Sloane. I think there were people climbing in the trees to try to watch that match.

I think it has a really good place. There's people in the sport who have different points of view. My thing is, to the doubles players, let's make sure that you deliver value because there is an investment. They're really committed to it.

Two things that we're doing this week. Yesterday we had an amazing ProAm. One of the things they do in golf is the day before the tournament, the big supporters can play with the players. We did that yesterday on stadium court. It was awesome. We had a bunch of the top doubles guys, umpires, they got to live it. That was great.

The biggest is that we're, for the first time ever on the tour, going to live mic players during the matches. This has been sort of a dream of mine for years since we took over.

My favorite clips from the NBA and NFL are listening to players during the games. I've always wanted to do it in tennis.

We did it in 2017 in World TeamTennis, and it was magic. The ability to listen to what the serving team is doing, what they think the other team is going to do, then listening to the receiving team, what they think, watch the point unfold, it's incredible.

It's taken until right now. It's first time ever it's done on tour. I think we're going to create incredible content. I think it's going to get fans engaged.

When we first did it in World TeamTennis, I was actually thinking more from a singles point of view. I wanted to communicate the exertion and physical nature of the sport. It didn't translate as much. The gold was in the doubles, listening to the players talk to each other.

I'm so thrilled that people are going to get to see, hopefully live as much as possible. But then the stuff that comes after like in the NFL and NBA is amazing. I hope it's part of the game long-term.

Q. Is that only for this week that it's being trialed?

MARK EIN: Yeah. It's the first time. It's just about to start. The tour has been great. They're really committing a lot to this.

Obviously I have involvement in a lot of sports. We brought the NBA in, the people who do that. I was talking to especially the doubles guys. They get it. This could be really good for us. People are embracing it. I think it's going to be amazing.

Q. This is the last year before Cincinnati and Canada both expand to being longer events, which makes it a tighter summer. On a player side, how are you bracing for that change coming next year?

MARK EIN: You know, people have all points of view. There's a point of view it's closer to Wimbledon. It is. Some years we're already the same distance to Wimbledon, the schedule changes. That's the one thing, some players will want more rest.

The flip side is in what other people think with those other tournaments, with a lot more days off, people may feel like they can play another week.

No matter what happens, we're the first big hard court event of the summer swing. I'm confident there's always going to be a huge number of players who want to get the summer started. Look what's happening this year. I think we'll be fine.

I think the other silver lining is people in D.C. tend to leave town in August. We're kind of now the last week before people leave town. This will give us another week more in the heart of the summer when families are still here. I think that might be another positive that comes of it.

Q. I'm old enough to remember watching on live TV John McEnroe argue with the officials, Boris Becker yelling at himself. You talk about players being mic'd up. It sounds like there's a desire from the younger generation to maybe get more up close and personal, really know what they're thinking. Talk about the value in that. Obviously anything that happens that's loud is going to be interesting.

MARK EIN: Yeah, I mean, when we talked to the team from the NBA that does it, they say, This is our best social asset, the single best thing we do is the live mic'ing.

In today's day and age, people want to get inside in a way they can't. It's just the nature of the world we live in. People want those unique insights. There is nothing like actually listening to the players talking.

We have Frances and Kokkinakis playing doubles. We're going to have gold from that. Listening to those guys talk is going to be absolutely unbelievable. Those guys are NBA fans. They see other sports. They're like, Yeah, I want to do that, too.

I do think if you look at the explosion in sports around the world, especially the United States, the sports that have become the biggest are the ones that give more of those unique kind of access and insights into the players. That's been what has fueled them.

I think it's overdue for our sport to do this. I'm glad that we're going to start it here in Washington.

Q. Speaking about World TeamTennis, if could wave a magic wand and bring in any of the things we got used to in World TeamTennis to enhance it for a TV audience, what would you recommend?

MARK EIN: The thing we learned from World TeamTennis is how do you create an event out of it. The foundation of the strategy here came from World TeamTennis. How do you make it more than just tennis? That's what we've done here.

On the court, I think live mic'ing is a big one. I think there's another trial going on, a lot of trials in tennis, of having more fan movement, not limiting people to just changeovers when it's not behind the court. You're going to see that. I think that's good.

I think everything you can do to modernize the game, make it more accessible, make it more fun for fans, is a good thing. I think as we just were saying, the younger players see it in other sports and they want to do it, too. I think all these things are really positive for the sport.

Thanks so much, guys.

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