

Mubadala Citi DC Open

Saturday, August 3, 2024

Washington D.C.

Frances Tiafoe

Press Conference



F. TIAFOE/A. Rublev

6-4, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: You're in the semifinal in DC. How do you feel right now?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I feel incredible. Third time lucky, man. Had some tough ones the last couple years. Kyrgios, so many match points. Dan played incredible against me last year. It wasn't any easier today playing Andrey. I knew what I had to come with. He's 9 in the world, been top 10 for so long. I knew the level I had to bring. Glad I brought it. It was an incredible atmosphere tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What was the key tonight?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Energy. It was energy and aggressive play. I think I used the crowd great. I got them into it early. I had great energy. I was super positive. Obviously I served well. I think I had a lot of net points won, putting a lot of pressure on him. That was the biggest thing.

I think when Andrey has a lot of time, he's the one dictating, very, very tough to play him. Yeah, I just made it very tough for him.

Q. To get into the weekend of this tournament, what does that mean?

FRANCES TIAFOE: It's big. It's big. Obviously I've wanted to do that for a very long time, get in the weekend, get into the business end of the tournament.

Yeah, I mean, it's a great thing I broke that streak. Obviously I want more. I'm not really that ecstatic about it. I'm just happy I get another win here and another win in general. Every win right now is big for me. Kind of building me to go the right way. This is really good.

Q. Your level seemed high from the jump. Was that part of the game plan, get into sustained groundstrokes back and forth, then you're able to dictate play even on his serve?

FRANCES TIAFOE: No, I don't love long rallies, no. If it has to come, yeah. You got to get to the nitty and gritty sometimes. I was winning actually a lot of those long rallies today.

Thought I moved really well tonight. Super balanced on both sides. Moving well out of the corners, hitting great shots. Andrey is going to put you there. Best players in the world make you hit the best shots out of the corners and see what you come up with. I did a great job of that.

Q. This crowd tonight was the largest of the week. Did it feel different out there, all behind you? Did it feel more palpable than the past tournaments you've played here?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I think it's the best crowd by far. I thought it was pretty much full. People going absolutely nuts. I did a great job of getting them in there early, getting them riled up. They were so with me. It was super one-sided.

I think everybody was really excited for me this year, really want me to get going, not only here, but the next tournament. I can really feel the love that they have for me here right now. We're going to use that for tomorrow, for sure.

Q. You've been dreaming of this moment since you were a little boy. When that moment finally did happen, you did the fist pump, what was going through your mind?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, obviously I was super pumped. More pumped beating a guy like Andrey. I haven't beaten a guy of that level for a very long time. That just feels good. It feels good knowing the work I've put in, trying to revamp myself, trying to get back, locked in, having fun. It's paying off.

Yeah, it's big. But obviously it's not what I really, really want to do. I want to win the event. I'm just happy I was able to go one round further and give myself that chance.

Q. You talk about wanting to win the event. How do you take the excitement from tonight, now focus on tomorrow and hopefully Sunday?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, just continue to stay process oriented, continue to stay in a routine. Obviously everyone is going to be super excited when I go back in the lounge and see everybody. Continue to stay locked in, stay in the moment.

Q. The celebration right after, when you yell into the crowd, is that joy, relief?

FRANCES TIAFOE: A little bit of both, right? A lot of joy, a lot of relief at that point. Beating a guy like Andrey is always big. At that moment, just a lot of joy, man. I was super pumped up. I played great tonight. That's all the emotions of tough, tough matches, tough season. To be able to win a match like that and play great just felt really good.

Q. You talked about wanting to rediscover your joy. Do you feel like it's coming back?

FRANCES TIAFOE: 100%. I'm having a great time. Wimbledon and here. In Atlanta, I was kind of really looking forward to this tournament. Wimbledon, here, I've been having so much fun playing, competing. No matter how really I'm playing, having so much fun competing.

Having a lot of friends and family here makes me feel comfortable. I really want to be here.

Q. Anything in particular you felt was working well with your serve?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, my serve (smiling).

Q. Anything in particular with the serve?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I just felt in a really good rhythm. Just felt in a really good rhythm. I thought I was pretty well hitting my spots. He had a tough time reading it.

Q. Regarding the joy, do you have a better appreciation being 26?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, a lot more gratitude, man. A lot more gratitude. I just feel like, yeah, I mean, I'm just kind of embracing my position, understanding who I am, understanding where I'm at in my career.

I know when I'm coming out here and playing, kind of got to zoom out sometimes when you're out there competing. So many people are excited to see me play. Kind of understanding that and knowing that when you're out there, you're not only competing for yourself and want to win, but people definitely want to see you perform at the highest level and be you.

That's kind of what I'm going back to. That's making me really happy and feeling good.

Q. Terps related question. I saw Coach Locks got here tonight.

FRANCES TIAFOE: I know he was there. I didn't see his big ass there. I need to go see him.

Q. He has spoken about you, how you have a great mentor type of relationship. Speak to the relationship you guys have.

FRANCES TIAFOE: He's really big on my ebbs and flows. He doesn't want me to be a thermostat, he wants me to be more of a thermometer. Not just ride these ones so much, which I can do that at times.

He's been a great mentor to me. Especially a different outlook, him coming from a different background, giving me that killer mentality, trying to build me as a man, understand life values that correlate, understanding you got a short time to do special things, prioritizing certain things.

He's been a great guy. Obviously in his position, being a head coach, he's a leader of men. I think having him in my life and having a guy that I can come bounce ideas off of, get a different outlook, has been great.

Super excited to go see him. This was his first time watching me play. I'm glad this is the match he saw.

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