

# Western & Southern Open

Monday, August 16, 2021

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

## Stefanos Tsitsipas

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. As this North American hard court season continues, do you feel there is anything you need to adjust in your game as you go through some of these big events and leading on to the US Open? What are you the most satisfied with? What are you the most concerned with? Because we are in the middle of big events right now.**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I know for a fact that all these events have different kind of conditions to be adjusting to. Some of the places are a bit more humid . Other ones might be a bit higher, meaning there is altitude a little bit, not much, things like that, which, you know, obviously the feeling doesn't remain consistent and you have to adjust to it.

For me, right now my top priority is finding that balance, finding that quick adjustment from switching from one tournament to the next without massive gaps or holes in my game. That is "the" main priority right now. Of course that's going to come with lots of practice, lots of fitness, work, and just getting that feel more and more.

**Q. In the past, Cincinnati was always a good thermometer on how players would do at the US Open. How do you feel playing Cincinnati and being ready for the Open? And also, you are ready to have Masters 1000 titles. How important is it for you to do well?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Right now I find, you know, big importance of competing at the best of my game in the next tournaments. My top priority is getting far into the tournament, playing good tennis. I have said it: I'm not aiming for titles, I'm not aiming to go and win every single one of them.

I want to get at the stage of a tournament where I'm able to get a lot of points so I can finish within my goal this year, and my goal has been clear from the very beginning. I want to get to that. Obviously I will be very happy if something extremely good comes out of it, I won't say no to that, and I will work towards that. But the starting point is where the big points are.

With that, I need to be in good physical shape. I need to be mentally prepared for the battles I'm going to give out on the court and just have a clear picture of the next couple of matches I'm going to have to play.

**Q. You mentioned ranking point goals. What specifically are those goals? Do you feel much different or better being at No. 3 recently? Does it feel like you have a different attitude towards rankings now that you are No. 3?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: There is different attitudes now than there was before. I remember when I broke for the very first time to the top five, a bit different compared to now. I think confidence-wise I have benefited from it much more now than before.

As I said, No. 3 is a number that is very significant and it holds like big importance. I wouldn't say there is pressure to it, but it definitely adds some value to yourself for the efforts that you have put in recent time to get there.

For me, it kind of pushes me so much to sustain that, to want to go the extra mile in the next tournaments, and, yeah, that was my initial goal from the beginning of the year, to make it into the top three. Now my second phase of that goal is to remain there and consistently add points week in and week out and have it close that way at the end of the year.

You know, I do have a small gap from the number to No. 3. There is also a smaller gap from me and the No. 4 player. I want to, instead of being on the minus side, more on the plus side. That is obviously defending, and that is also on top of that making a few better results than I had last year.

**Q. In the race rankings you're No. 2 right now, so things are pretty well for this goal, looks like.**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Correct, yes. As I said, aiming for the big points. I know that most of the big points are semifinals onwards. That's where you get the most amount of points, and I want to be aiming for that.



Of course if I reach the very first goal of it, I'm not gonna stop. I'm still going to, you know, give an extra pace and continue doing the things that I have been doing well from that point onwards. But the very first step is getting there. That's the place where I emphasize the most.

**Q. Has it been a different type of excitement or happiness from breaking into the top 10 for the first time, breaking into the top 5 for the first time, compared to breaking into the top 3 now for the first time? Is it a different type of excitement and elation each time, and this is the highest that it could go for the moment? How would you explain that?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: You don't get many exciting moments like this in your career. The very first moment that I got to be part of this and feel that thrill and that energy and that adrenaline out of competition was when I entered the top 10 for the first time in Dubai after reaching the finals of Dubai. You know, I saw it on Monday come out, and it was very -- I felt overwhelmed by it. It was a great feeling.

Then, you know, it took a while for me -- I think it was the same year that I got into the top five, which was an even better feeling, and I think the top three is the best of them all. It just takes so much time to wait for something like this to happen, which eventually makes you feel great, and it's, you know, a reason why it makes you feel like this.

I had no clue. I woke up on Monday a few weeks ago, and someone told me, you know, I got to No. 3. I had no idea what Rafael Nadal had to do in order for me to get there, because I was completely out of any kind of information or wasn't following any tennis. But it felt good and, you know, the rankings are there for a reason. They signify something important.

The next step, I think that the very next step would be the No. 1 spot, which I hope I can get to one day.

**Q. You're just saying that, talking about the excitement and all that of these milestones, two things: One, can you imagine what it would be like to be part of that elite club of being No. 1, and two, is it in one sense a bit overwhelming as well with the extra focus of attention and things like that?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Not at all. I see it as a challenge, as a challenging thing to do, and it's me against my strengths so much. It's not so much me against my opponent. It's me showing what I'm capable of.

If I keep it strategic and tactical, I think these things can come. It's not about going out there and winning every

single tournament week in, week out. You know, you are not a robot. You can do this, you can pull it off, but this is not the main focus right now.

As I said, these kind of milestones are very unique, and for me, the ones that every player should be aiming for is top 10, top 5, top 3, and then top 1, of course, these are some of the more significant numbers, in my opinion.

Yeah, to get there, we will have to wait a little bit. It will be a big clash between, you know, a few of my rivals, because they want the same exact same thing as me. So, you know, more work, more precise work to be done, and I think lots of patience on court and off court.

**Q. What do you think you would want more or would be a bigger deal for you, winning a major or getting to No. 1?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: That's a very good question (smiling). Well, I think winning a major -- the possibilities of getting to No. 1 are most probable than -- I don't know. I feel like winning a major can give you so many points, so much confidence, that eventually you're going to make it to No. 1.

Talking about that in the position I am, it is going to be a big difference. If I would be ranked outside of top 10 or at around 8 or 7 in the world, it's a different story.

But my answer is it would be a Grand Slam, let's say. Yeah.

**Q. In tracking players and their vaccination efforts, I know it can be tricky for some players with all the travel you guys do on tour. Have you been able to be vaccinated personally or something you're looking to do in the U.S.?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I haven't. No one has told me anything. No one has made it a mandatory thing to be vaccinated. At some point I will have to, I'm pretty sure about it, but so far it hasn't been mandatory to compete, so I haven't done it, no.

**Q. You only would if it became mandatory, is what you're saying?**

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Of course.

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