

Western & Southern Open

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Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Madison Keys

Press Conference



M. KEYS/E. Rybakina

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Welcome to the semifinals. Can you just talk about the match, your mindset going in, your game plan, and how do you feel like you pulled it off?

MADISON KEYS: I think it was actually pretty similar to the last two matches, knowing she's going to hit a really big ball, that I'm going to have to defend and actually not be the one that's attacking all of the time.

But I think that first break was really important, just trying to get out in front right away. It was super important and helped me a lot.

Then in that second set, breaking back immediately I think really just kind of helped keep my momentum and not let her get too far ahead of me. I feel like when she's playing on her front foot and dictating, things can go very quickly, so I was doing whatever I could just to get her off of the baseline and as uncomfortable as possible.

Q. I know very different circumstances and very different conditions, but how much did the French Open win kind of help you, whether it's belief or tactically, having seen like three hours of her tennis from that match as well from an up-close perspective? How much did that help you in this matchup?

MADISON KEYS: I definitely think it helps having played people before, just because you kind of get a feeling for where they are going to go on bigger points or just, especially against her, knowing how the ball is going to come in.

I think had I never played her before, on this court it could have been a little bit more overwhelming, but I was very prepared for it, just because obviously I have played against it.

Q. When you have sort of an extended stay like this

week at a tournament, is it important to try to do things other than tennis, get out and take your mind off of what's actually happening here? Do you try to do that?

MADISON KEYS: I got here at like 1:00 a.m. on Monday morning, and then I have played pretty much late every day, so I have had no time to do anything other than go from my hotel, back to the site, back to my hotel and sleep, and do it again.

I typically try to get out and do some things, but I haven't had the opportunity to do that yet. I'm very happy to be done earlier today and maybe get some time to actually eat dinner at a restaurant with not plastic utensils (smiling).

Q. Correct me if I'm wrong, but Adelaide and Australian Open, you seemed very relaxed. You seemed very let's-go-with-the-flow. Seems like a very similar energy around you here in Cincinnati this week. I'm curious if you feel that at all, and if you felt like coming into this week that there was a different vibe around Team Keys?

MADISON KEYS: I definitely think I feel very similar to the start of the year and honestly just not really worrying about winning and losing. It's obviously hard, especially after having a good result, to keep that, Oh, it doesn't matter, it's fine. Then you start looking at the race and the rankings and all of that.

It's hard to keep that mindset consistently, but after having not-great matches in San Jose and Toronto, and then being able to play doubles, it really just kind of helped me, one, just enjoy playing tennis, and it was great to have Sania there.

It was the first time and maybe the last time we will ever play doubles. I told her she has to play next year and we will play doubles all year (smiling).

Just having that opportunity to have some fun, play some matches, and get that just competitive, it's-fine, go-out-and-play tennis really helped shift this week's mentality.



Q. This week we have seen a lot of the top women's players fall early. How do you feel going forward, knowing that so many big names dropped early? There are no easy matches in professional tennis, but going forward, how do you feel with a lot of the top players falling out early this year?

MADISON KEYS: I mean, I'm potentially playing my third Grand Slam champion in a row, so doesn't feel like the top players have fallen out of the draw early (smiling).

So I think that's just how tennis is. You can be -- I mean, we have plenty of players who are not seeded or in the low teens who have been on a tear all year, and they are still, in my opinion, top players or they are former champions.

I just don't think that there is really any easy draw, even if you're not playing the No. 1 or 2 player.

Q. "Court of Dreams" is very cool. Are you going to do that every year?

MADISON KEYS: I would love to. It was an amazing opportunity. It was very fun. The court was phenomenal. I had such a great time and was able to do that, so hopefully we can do that again.

Q. My niece loved it, Caty.

MADISON KEYS: Yeah, it was so fun, and we just kept talking about how crazy it was that we were just driving, and all of a sudden, there it was (smiling).

Q. Looking ahead then to either Petra, your third straight major champion, awesome draw for you, or Ajla, your very good friend, which is also a different kind of challenge, thoughts on that?

MADISON KEYS: Yeah, I mean, either one is going to be incredibly tough. I have obviously had some battles against Petra. Won some; lost some. It's never easy to play her, especially later in a draw, meaning that she's playing some very good tennis.

And then Ajla has played phenomenally all week, and she's had multiple three-set matches where she's come back after losing the first set, and to play in quallies, I mean, it's one of those things where a lot of people could look at it as, Oh, she must be tired, but at the same time, she has so much confidence and she feels so comfortable coming back and having those wins. Either way it's going to be a tough match.

Q. Just a question on Ajla, she's had a great season in

the last few months, Wimbledon quarters, just as somebody who is close to her and knows how hard she's been fighting for this and these sorts of breakthroughs, just your thoughts on her 2022 season and what she's been able to do?

MADISON KEYS: I think it's been pretty remarkable, and the fact that -- I mean, it was very unfortunate that she defended all of her points but didn't actually get to defend her points, so I can't imagine how difficult that was to basically do what you were supposed to do and then still have to work your way back up. So to see her having such a great week is really nice.

Q. I know you are good friends with Caty McNally. Wondering what it's going to take for her to go up the next step right now.

MADISON KEYS: I think this week was a phenomenal week for her, and getting through, especially at the end when she was cramping, and being able to win that tiebreaker was massive.

I mean, she was this close to beating Ons, and you never know what happens when you get that second win. I think it's one of those situations where it can change at any moment, and she's a phenomenal player. She's one of the hardest workers. I think it could happen at any time.

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