

# Western & Southern Open

Monday, August 14, 2023

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

## Felix Auger-Aliassime

Press Conference



F. AUGER-ALIASSIME/M. Berrettini

4-6, 6-2, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Not an easy win today. Talk us through the match.

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Yeah, very happy, very relieved. It was a tough first round. You know, it's a tough draw, and, you know, you have to be ready from the first match and be ready to compete and try hard and face adversity.

I think I dealt with it pretty well today, you know, from a set down. It was good to get the break early in the second set and start leading in the match again.

Very happy with the way I finished the match, obviously.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Your results have not been probably what you would have hoped recently. This is a great win over a tough opponent. What's it mean to you to get a win over an opponent the caliber of Matteo?**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Well, I never doubted my abilities or the player I am. I think I have proven to myself and others that I'm among the best players in the world in the past.

Now, this year has been challenging due to different reasons. Of course the knee injury that lasted very long kept me on the sideline and also just not playing with the intensity and the level that I can play and that I should play.

I think nowadays it's tough. You really need to be at your best. Take a first round like today and all the matches I'm going to play this week, you really need to move well and be explosive, need to play at your best. The level right now these days is too even, too close. I was really struggling a lot this year.

Now, you know, since I came back on hard court swing I felt much better. I just needed to accept, okay, I lost two

matches in a row. Not the comeback I was hoping for, but now it's my third week back since kind of the injury, and it's nice to get a win finally.

**Q. During difficult periods, do you feel like you have a measure of experience to draw upon, now that you have been around a few years?**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: No, I try to stay calm regardless, try to stay positive, you know, accept the challenge or accept the adversity, whether it's coming from an injury, from losses, from personal reasons, whatever. I try to do the best what I control.

That's it, really. Try to learn from losses, try to also see what's working well in practice and focus on that. I try to not also always look at what's not going well but also think what had me winning these last few years or last year and what part of my game can I focus on? Something simple that I can just stick to and try to go at it.

That's what I did today, just try to play to my strengths, being explosive, being the one dominating, making the other guy run as much as I can and cover the court also if he's on the offense as well.

I think I did that well. Served better. Yeah, it's going in the right direction again.

**Q. Along those lines, how do you balance the idea of just trusting the process, trusting what has already worked versus maybe it's time to sound the alarm and make some changes?**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Yeah. It's a gut feeling. You know, it's a feeling sometimes. I have had good periods and I thought, well, I want to go a bit higher.

So you change, I don't know, I added Toni Nadal to the team and got his experience over the last few years. You know, changing fitness coach, physio.

It's kind of like you see what's happening, and you talk with the people close to you, people that you trust, and then you kind of also, at the end I try to be responsible of my career.

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I mean, I'm the one playing, I'm the one on the court.

I just, yeah, I feel like when I make choices, I think about them, and I live by, you know, I can really happily live by the choices that I make.

In terms of, yeah, decisions or to whether to change, whether to keep going, it's really a feeling. I try to stay patient also. It's important. And trust that what I can do best is train well and focus on what I can control. If I do that, I trust that the results will come.

**Q. Where would you sort of rate yourself versus the successful season you had last year right now?**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Right now? Well, of course there were matches last year where I played some of the best tennis I've played. I beat great players, great opponents. I had also some tough losses in slams, for example, last year.

It's where I am right now. I feel good about my game. Like, on the practice court or now physically I feel pretty good. I'm not too far from, like, the best version of myself. But at the same time, we'll see. I need kind of more matches to say, Okay, I'm really playing great, great tennis again. Or, you know, that's why it's important for me today was great, but it's important to keep going with that same desire and same determination.

You know, I think if I can win more matches this week, then I can kind of prove to myself again or even confirm what I have been feeling, which is, you know, I'm there. I'm not like so far from my best level.

**Q. (Question about physical development.)**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Yeah, yeah. I think it's crucial in today's game. I mean, all the best players do it, really. I think that's why people care so much now about preparation, about flexibility, range of movement, and also for the long term, because, you know, you see what it requires a guy like Novak to be that competitive still.

Of course he's "the" best example, but I think all the young players are very careful when they are playing the long game and are trying to be very prepared for what's to come both in terms of, yeah, range of motion and strength.

Of course, for me it was always natural since I'm a kid to slide on hard courts. I think it was part of this generation that we saw players do it on TV and we kind of tried it as kids and it worked.

It's also, like, I don't know, like when something new comes

in sport and it impacts a whole generation, I feel like I was part of that.

But, yeah, it's definitely crucial, but you need the body to be ready for those kind of impacts. We actually measured, it can be almost three times your body weight on one impact when you're fully sprinting and stopping on a slide on hard courts. It's a lot of load on one foot or one ankle, you know.

**Q. (Question about measuring.)**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Well, I didn't measure it on myself, but I was talking with my fitness coach, and it was measurements that he's done in the past. He was telling me that. I was, like, Wow, yeah, the body needs to be ready for this kind of load.

**Q. Obviously your birthday wasn't quite according to plan.**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Yeah.

**Q. Were you able to spend it in Canada with the family? How was that?**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Yeah, unfortunately not so much. That's the reality of my life, my sport. It's okay. Last year I had an amazing birthday. It was just a little bit before the tournament. Had a great surprise. You know, family, friends were there. It's not every year I get, I guess, this kind of treatment.

But still it was nice. My mom was there. Next day we went for dinner, the day after I lost. It was nice to just be with her and enjoy a good dinner.

But, yeah, the night of, it was unfortunate. It's happened before, you know. It's kind of like the good thing and bad thing of having my birthday in Canada every year and during a tournament. It can go great, you know, everybody singing "Happy Birthday" after a win, or I can lose and it's kind of a tough way to end my birthday.

**Q. Players have said this is sort of a laid-back tournament. Having a tournament like this, has that helped in any way?**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: For sure, for sure. For the last few years, it's helped me a lot. I feel like, especially for me, it's always a huge difference between, you know, playing in Canada the week before. It's, like, the attention and just, like, the media demands.

I try to give a lot, also. You know, I'm there one week a



year in Canada. I try to give fans my time and sign autographs and meet people. You have friends and family. It gets a bit tiring at times.

It's great, but after, the transition to come here is great for me. Like you said, it's laid back, but at the same time, everybody that comes on-site, there is a lot of fans and they enjoy tennis, like today was a great atmosphere. You kind of enjoy that side of it. Of course, me not being a local, there is maybe not as much home pressure and I can focus on my game, train in peace, go back to hotel and go in the city, not be so recognized. Just more chill and laid back, for sure. It's great.

**Q. Costa Rica has a lot of tennis fans. What message, a short message, for all your Costa Rica tennis fans?**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Funny you asked that. My grandpa actually lives there half the year. Yeah, he's retired half the year there. It's a beautiful country.

I was there once. Great people. I think countries in Central America, South America sometimes get a bad reputation because there has been problems in the past, a bit of insecurity or violence.

But Costa Rica is very different. It feels very peaceful. People are very nice.

It's nice to know I have fans there. We don't have much tennis there. When I was there, there was not much tennis, but it's nice to know that people are watching and there are some fans. You know, hi to them and thank you for the support.

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