

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

Tommy Paul

Press Conference

T. PAUL/H. Hurkacz

7-5, 3-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Tommy, please.

Q. It's great to see you, Taylor and Seb go deep into the clay court tournaments. Would you attribute these successes to any particular general factor?

TOMMY PAUL: To a what?

Q. Any particular general factor, would you contribute these successes of American players on clay?

TOMMY PAUL: I mean, for me it's kind of just having more experience on the clay. I've had a lot of seasons over here. I got a pretty good training block before coming over here. I'm feeling more comfortable than I probably ever have.

I actually grew up playing on clay. That was all I played on, even before going to play hard court tournaments. The green clay, not the good stuff (smiling).

I mean, I'm comfortable on it. I'm really enjoying my time on it right now. But I don't know if there's one factor for all of us. I'm not sure.

Q. Lots of people in Rome are talking about your passion for Lazio. My question is, would you visit one day the training headquarters of Lazio? What do you think about the season of the team this year? Finally, what's your favorite player?

TOMMY PAUL: Favorite player is Immobile. I'm not sure how you guys say it (smiling). I went to a game last Sunday. That was the only game I've ever been to. I really enjoyed it.

I became a fan through Reilly Opelka. He kind of put me on. I didn't even know how it started for him. I think he had a friend out here in Rome that loved Lazio. Reilly actually locks in and watches a lot of the games.



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Yeah, I mean, it's been really fun. I met a couple people involved in the organization, learned a little bit of the history of the team, the teams here in Rome. It's been a fun little thing for me.

Q. About Lazio, because you went to a great celebration for 50 years since Tommaso Maestrelli. You have the same name as a legend of Lazio. What do you know about that team that made history?

TOMMY PAUL: Nothing. I don't know too much about it (laughter).

Yeah, I mean, I'm open to learning if you want to teach me a little bit.

Q. I would like to talk about something you said a few days ago. You stated that due to the injury, for the first time in many years you can work a few weeks more to prepare for the clay courts. How important was that for you? Could it be a consideration also for the future to take maybe before clay more weeks to prepare it, even if you have to sacrifice some tournaments?

TOMMY PAUL: It was really unfortunate, the ankle injury in Miami. I thought I was playing some of my best tennis.

Like you said, for me, I mean, it worked out really well. I had a lot of time to kind of prepare on the clay. It was kind of like starting from scratch.

I mean, I started my practices literally standing on one foot, how anybody would when they're recovering from an ankle injury. Like, every day doing a little bit more and a little bit more. I got really comfortable on the clay.

My whole team has kind of tried to get me to not play early in the clay court season, to have a longer training block. This year I was kind of forced to do it. I'm happy that it happened.

Q. Talking again about all the success of the Americans with you, Coco, Danielle all in the semifinals. Was there a dinner with a bunch of Americans earlier in the week? Who was there? Did that help you get psyched up for this tournament?



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TOMMY PAUL: There was like a USA dinner. I don't even know what day it was. I guess it was probably last Tuesday. I think everyone was invited. It was just kind of whoever showed up. We had a pretty good group. I think there was 20 of us or maybe a little bit more.

Yeah, I mean, it was fun. Anytime we can all get together, it's a good time, so... I don't know if that has anything to do with the success of this week. Yeah, I mean, it's fun.

Q. What do you like on clay actually?

TOMMY PAUL: What do I like?

Q. Yes.

TOMMY PAUL: I like playing tennis on it (smiling).

It's been fun this year. Obviously in the past not so much fun for me. But I kind of have a different approach coming into it this year. I'm excited to play on it. I'm not complaining about the bounces not being perfect every time. I think that's just part of clay. It's all about how you approach it.

Q. We talk about Lazio, we talk about dinner, but I didn't understand still what happened today. These ups and downs was about the heat? Was about what? Many breaks, many mistakes. What happened?

TOMMY PAUL: A lot of breaks, a lot of breaks happened (smiling).

I mean, I don't think it had anything to do with the heat. We play in a lot of hot places. Today wasn't too, too hot. There was actually a little breeze, so it didn't even feel bad on the court.

I'm not really sure, to be honest, why there were so many breaks. Yeah, it was an absolute roller coaster of a match, especially the third set. It was weird.

I mean, I wasn't serving great today. I think my average serve was probably like 105 or 110. I wasn't serving big. My kick serves were jumping a bit. I was kind of just relying on that. I mean, that's not, like, a comfortable place to be.

I was on his serve pretty good. I don't think he was popping it like he normally does, for whatever reason. So, yeah, I mean, it was an interesting match. I'm not really sure why it was the way it was.

Q. In the second set you were up 2-Love, a ball for 3-Love.

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah.

Q. You missed.

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah.

Q. Then you lost your serve playing four points, incredible mistakes from a player of your level.

TOMMY PAUL: I don't remember those points.

Q. You lost the serve.

TOMMY PAUL: At 2-1?

Q. Yes. You missed a lot of dropshot, which was a lob. You made a lot of mistakes that were not usual for you. Third set breaks up and down. Six break points in the game. Three match points. It was a wonderful game. Wonderful shots and incredible mistakes. How do you explain this? Is this just clay or the fact that you are not used to be solid and consistent on a clay court?

TOMMY PAUL: I'm not sure how to explain it.

Q. Is mental?

TOMMY PAUL: I don't know. I don't know what it is. I guess we'll have to work on it and see what it looks like in the next match.

Q. You've been working with Brad for a few years now. What specifically has he added to your clay game? I think he's worked with some great clay court players in the past. Maybe that's helped that he has that experience.

TOMMY PAUL: I mean, I've been with Brad for four or five years now. I mean, he's added so much to my game, not just like on any particular surface. He's added a lot to my game as a whole.

I mean, I have another coach that I work with when I'm home. Hugo Armando. He's the guy I really spend time with when I'm home. He works with Brad. They talk pretty much every day when I'm home.

His best surface was clay. He's kind of the one who works with me a bunch on the dirt before starting the season. Brad came down also to Boca. I think we kind of just worked on moving back a little bit, taking a step back, letting points kind of develop and settle.

I mean, you kind of see the court differently when you take a step back. Not everything is so rushed, so quick. I think he wanted me to maybe take a couple steps back today also, but I was kind of stubborn with it. I mean, in my last match, I was kind of on offense a ton. Today was a lot different.

I mean, Hubie, he can hit the ball pretty big and force you back. I was a little stubborn to take that step back today.

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