

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Danielle Collins

Press Conference



D. COLLINS/E. Alexandrova

6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Danielle, congratulations. You're into your first 1000 final. Talk about how you're feeling right now, the emotions, especially in your home state of Florida.

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah, to have made the finals, first finals of a 1000 level in my home state during my last season, this is just, like, great. I mean, the memories made this week on and off the court, yeah, I'm just over the moon.

A day off tomorrow, hit the golf course, play a little tennis. Living the dream. Living the dream in Miami.

Yeah, I'm playing great tennis. Having some good battles out there against really great players. That should give me a lot of confidence for Saturday.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What is with the golf fetish? What do you get out of it? What draws you to it? And then the second question is you have been staying on a very even keel with all this, and then just hearing you talk about big emotions, how do you keep it down here?

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah, so golf, I, as a kid, obviously like tennis and golf, a lot of places in Florida offer both. There is tennis courts and golf courses close to each other.

I remember I was in a camp as a kid, and you played tennis in the morning and then you would have golf in the afternoon. I used to say, Dad, tell the tennis coaches I do not want to play golf, because I'm so bad and I want to focus on my tennis. So my dad would get me out of the golf.

Now I'm regretting that a little bit as an adult, because I'm having a harder time picking it up. But it's been a really great outlet to just, on my off days, have something to look forward to.

When I'm in other tournaments like in California or Australia, I do like to surf and get out there, but not every place that we go offers surfing. So golf has kind of filled that void a little bit. It's been fun learning something new.

I feel like for me I'm someone that needs a lot of mental stimulation. By learning new things, I feel like it keeps my brain sharp, keeps me thinking about different things, keeps me from focusing on tennis too much.

Yeah, I think there is just something good for us about challenging ourselves to learn a new skill or a new hobby. Now I'm starting to enjoy it a little bit. I have some friends here the last couple of weeks, and so we have played a little golf. We are going tomorrow. It's just now becoming, like, a thing (laughter).

Q. And about just another match, you have been very low-key all week.

DANIELLE COLLINS: What do you mean by "low-key?" Calm?

Q. You walk off the court and you're like, Oh, hey, no big deal. I just played a tennis match, I have a golf time in a little bit. It's sort of like a side hustle, it seems like. (Laughter.)

A. Yeah, I guess it does come off like that sometimes. Yeah, I don't know. I mean, I think as you get older, you mellow out a little bit more. You're not so hyper-focused and you -- I don't know. You just, I guess, take interest in, like, other things too.

I went to college, and I have always had other things that I have been interested in and hobbies that I like to do. I just haven't really always carved out the time to do them.

I feel like the last few months I have taken more time to focus on those things, because they bring me so much enjoyment. It also makes the tennis more fun, because I'm so bad at golf that when I come out and play tennis, compared to my golf game, I'm a lot better at tennis. So it makes me feel a lot better too.



So that could be helping my confidence and making me, you know, more relaxed. I don't know. (Laughter.)

Q. Congratulations on a tremendous win tonight. You touched upon the significance of winning in Miami and happening here, but can you talk a little bit about the significance of having it happen at this stage in your career, kind of coming full circle, looking at what you have done, what you have been through and how amazing it is that you're going to be heading into this final, and also about the opponent you're going to be facing? Can you break that down?

DANIELLE COLLINS: What was the first part again?

Q. The significance of winning and heading into the final at this stage of your career. Not just the fact that it's in Miami, but everything you have been through to get to this point, and then facing Rybakina in the final.

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah, I mean, you know, like we have talked about in many press conferences, you know, I'm 30 but I haven't really played that long on tour. I remember when I made my first semis at Australian Open, and they were, like, I remember there was some news, and they were like, Oh, Danielle Collins never won a Grand Slam match before this. I was like, I have only played, like, three Grand Slams. (Laughter.) Okay.

So I feel like you need time to get experience and you need time to learn about yourself, what works, what doesn't work. There are so many different areas: physical, mental, emotional. Obviously with the physical challenges and the health stuff, that has been something that I have dealt with the majority of my career, and it hasn't been easy.

But I have been able to figure out different ways to be able to work around it as best as I can. Doesn't make the problems go away. Doesn't always make the problems better, but being able to problem-solve a little bit and get creative in how I recover, how I prepare for matches, how I handle my off-days, how I handle training weeks, all of that, it's taken time.

I feel like from a physical and mental standpoint, I feel like I have had a really great preparation coming into this, and this has been one of the first times where this might be the most tournaments that I have played in a row.

So that's something new, and that's something to reflect on after the tournament. I have had a lot of matches, and I think with those matches, I've won some great matches, I've won some close matches, I've lost some close

matches. So I have been working on, you know, recovering quickly, getting through those, working around injuries and all that. I think that's helped me a lot, all of the matches that I have gotten under my belt.

Quite frankly, the amount of matches that I have played this year, previously in some years, I haven't played this many matches in one season.

So I'm learning a lot about myself still, and I feel like now I'm figuring out some things that worked that maybe I didn't think would work and also learning some things that sometimes don't work that I have had to, you know, reflect on.

So, yeah, I'm looking forward to playing Elena. We have had a lot of great matches previously, some battles. That's what we play for as professional athletes, these close ones. Every time I have played her, it's neck and neck. These games are close, the points are close, they are long, challenging points. Big serves from both of us. Big returns, big groundstrokes. I think we will go out there and put on a great show and it will be a fun match.

Q. Congrats. A quick one on the golf, do you go to the range or do you actually walk the course and play holes?

DANIELLE COLLINS: I play holes. I start at the range. Gotta warm up. I start there. I do a few holes. I don't do 18 holes. But I do a few just until I feel good. I don't like to overdo it. It takes a long time to play golf. It's a lot of patience.

The tennis is kind of go, go, go, go, go. Golf gets extended. But it's nice, especially on the off days, to be able to catch up with friends. I love the culture around it, the social part of it, as well.

So, yeah, I get that golf cart going and I have some of the same reactions sometimes on the golf course that I do on the tennis court. I think I shock a lot of the people that are out on the range. I'm, like, oh, this isn't my sport, I'm a tennis player (laughter).

Q. Then the other question is how do you kind of rate this accomplishment and this achievement of making the final here in Miami compared to some of your big moments that you have had in your career in the past? What makes this one similar and what makes it different, I guess?

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah, I have never made a final of a tournament having my dog here. That has had a positive impact, for sure. I'm learning that my weeks are better with

Mr. Q. He's my son. Having my son here means a lot.

It's also different. I think some of the matches that I have played, I have played very efficient, I haven't spent a lot of time on court. I have played similar strategies throughout the tournament against similar types of opponents, I would say. I mean, of course in the first two rounds, different styles, but the last few have been kind of similar.

Then, yeah, similarities, right?

Q. Does it feel big?

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah, of course. This feels like a really big accomplishment. I think all of us want to make finals of 1000-level tournaments. These are our biggest tournaments of the year, aside from the Grand Slams. This is just so special. I can't stress it enough about being in my home state and having my dog here, friends, family. It's really special.

Q. (Off microphone.)

DANIELLE COLLINS: I do have a coach here. His name is Ben Maxwell. I have worked with Ben a little bit during different periods. He's a college coach. I get to him in spurts because of the college schedule.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

DANIELLE COLLINS: Quincy is watching, and he is tuned in, and we have videos of him watching matches and being so confused why, like, the ball and mom and why we are not there with him.

So he will be very happy to get -- hopefully we can get out of here in time to pick him up. I've got to get out of here, guys. I have got to pick up my dog from day care.
(Laughter.)

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