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Danielle Collins

Press Conference



D. COLLINS/E. Rybakina

7-5, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Danielle, congratulations on your first 1000-level title. Just talk us through the emotions right now and how you're feeling after this incredible two weeks.

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah, I mean, what a dream come true to have played at the level that I have played consistently over the last two weeks. This has been such a journey for me.

30 years old, you know, this was the finals of my first 1000, and it's been a different journey than I think a lot of the stories that we're familiar with.

Yeah, it's just been amazing to go out today and to have felt the energy that I felt from the fans and literally feel like I'm playing in front of thousands of my best friends, that was just surreal. I will never forget this day because of that.

Everywhere I looked, people were, like, Let's go, Danielle. You can do this.

The encouragement I got, it was hard for me to hide the emotion. I think these are the moments that we live for and don't always get to have them. It was just really special.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Are you reconsidering retirement?

DANIELLE COLLINS: No, I'm not (smiling). Thank you, though.

I feel like all of these questions are coming from such a good place, because I feel like a lot of people would like to continue seeing me play well.

But like I said, I have some health challenges, and with those health challenges, it makes things for me away from the court a little more difficult. I hope everyone can respect that. It's a very emotional and personal thing. Yeah.

Q. Danielle, obviously St. Pete girl, obviously Florida, and then you being the first American woman to win at Hard Rock, that's something special since the tournament changed locations. You mentioned obviously how hard it was to hide the emotions, but had some fist pumps out there, building up the crowd a bit. In the final match point, can you share those emotions a bit? What was that like?

DANIELLE COLLINS: Well, I had a few match points, and Elena was doing some great things out there and pushing me back and really forcing me to come up with some good stuff movement-wise, hitting hard shots, hitting the small parts of the court.

So that is really challenging when someone forces you to come up with your best stuff. I certainly felt that way on the returns and the serving today. I knew that I had to bring my A game.

You know, I think it's great when you have so many matches where you feel like you're in the zone and you're playing well. I'm a human, and so sometimes you start sitting there and, you're like, Is this too good to be true? Am I going to lose my ability to place the ball inside the court today? Am I going to trip and fall?

That's a thing that kind of crosses your mind. Is this too good to be true, the way I'm playing right now?

And then just trying to bring it in and stay focused and think about things tactically, technically, and make adjustments when needed. Because I think this is what tennis is all about. It's a game of adjusting.

I had to do that a lot during this match and had to be open-minded and try to get a little bit creative. I did a good job of that.

I told myself, Just keep those emotions in the locker room, and then we can go and be emotional a little bit later. But it was hard to hold it in. It was just such a happy day for me on the court. Whether I won or lost, having the crowd support, I have never gotten to experience anything like it.



Only thing similar is playing against Barty in Australia, and the crowd was the other way, which was also really cool to be a part of, as well, but to have, like, literally felt like I was playing in front of thousands of my best friends, I just -- yeah, I'll never forget it (smiling).

Q. Congratulations. So this tournament we have been surprised by more experienced players. We're seeing Dimitrov tomorrow in the final. You playing in the final and winning. Do you think this is maybe a sign, a signal, that the new generation is not yet established, or how do you interpret this? Do you see it as a sign?

DANIELLE COLLINS: Or in a more positive way, maybe, like, the older people like me and Grigor, maybe we have a little bit more wisdom under our belt, right? I don't know. (Laughter.)

It's hard to tell. I like to think of it more like that rather than what you were saying, but yeah. Yeah, I'll go with that perspective instead. (Laughter.)

Q. After match point you sort of bent over and stood there for a while. What was going through your head then? And also, my second question, you're going to play past US Open, right, or is the US Open...

DANIELLE COLLINS: We'll get to that later. We'll do that a little bit later.

But that game was long. It was hard. It was physical. I had to come up with some big serves which takes a lot out of you.

That was by far, I think, aside from my very first match this tournament, that was the longest I had battled out there. Like I said, Elena was just pushing me all over the court and coming up with hard-hitting shots. I had to do a good job of absorbing, running, getting scrappy at times, trying to get my racquet on the ball, trying to counter and play aggressive.

I was also, you know, feeling nerves. I wanted to close it out. I didn't want to let the fans down. There were so many thoughts going through my head. I think at the end I was just like, Thank God, thank you. Got through that hurdle (smiling).

Yeah. It just all caught up with me.

Q. Danielle, just to go back to that point and that game, really, which you said was really long and lots of battling, it was tense to watch. I imagine it was extremely tense to play. Were there other moments,

like, in your career that flashed through your mind at that point, like NCAA games with the NCAA title on the line? Or what were you calling on to get through that and find the stuff that you needed?

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah, well, I think all of the past experiences, positive and negative, definitely help. You have moments where you're, like, oh, this is similar to that and that can help me. Then you have moments where, Wait a second, up a set and a break, oh, not this again. (Laughter.)

That can creep in too at times. I think just staying within myself, a lot of the psychological work that I have done has been kind of centered around breathing and the routines between the point to kind of get me centered. I feel like this tournament has been the most centered that I have been.

I know it sounds like a little yoga, hippy-dippy, and I know that's probably really weird with my persona, but I do try to kind of think about that stuff a lot to keep me in check. You know, I feel like the experience that I had, like, playing in Australia in front of big crowds, like, especially when I played Barty was really helpful.

I also think in other finals that played like San Jose, Palermo, and those were much smaller arenas compared to what we were playing in today, I think that helped. Playing under pressure at Billie Jean King Cup, a couple of close ties there that I've gotten to be a part of, you're playing for something bigger than yourself. That is a lot more pressure, just like in college.

So I think all those experiences helped me. But I was very focused too on having my box help me as much as they could. Having that support is critical, I think, for us as individual athletes. Having people that have been in my corner for so long like Ben and then Jimmy coming out today helps, nice to have a former world No. 2 in your corner giving you some tactical advice in those moments because they have been there. That was really helpful, as well.

I think I have to credit my box too for helping me get through those big moments. There are moments where you feel like you get punched in the stomach and moments where you feel so excited and happy. It's just a roller coaster out there. I think it's like that for everyone.

Q. When you woke up this morning or stepped on the court today with knowing that this is going to be your last Miami Open or the last year, does this decision make you feel more pressure or more you can appreciate the situation more?

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DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah, I mean, when I walked in today, I immediately had, like, a few cameramen on me and we were having some great moments with my team. I said, you know, these are some, like, really special moments. I don't want to be so focused on everything else where I don't get to kind of take it in.

I really think, like, part of the reason why I played so well and did a good job today was because I had that mentality of, like, I'm going to enjoy every minute of this. This is my last year, this is my last season, and these are some of my final events. I want to remember these moments.

I do look back on sometimes different stages of my career, and be like, wow, that's kind of a blur and I don't really remember it that much. It doesn't really seem that long ago when you say, oh, four years or six years, but in a lot of ways it can feel like an eternity.

I'm just trying to get better at taking it in, like you were saying. I feel like today I woke up and when we were in the car, I was, like, oh, this is going to be the first time I play a finals in my home state and have a lot of crowd support. This is so exciting. We changed the playlist, got really pumped up. It was just so much fun. This day has been, like, the best.

I've been going, going, going for the past few months playing back-to-back tournaments. Now I get to celebrate with friends. I have so many family members and friends that have flown in from all around the country and world. We're going to have a great weekend. We got a pickleball tournament coming up tomorrow. Yeah, I'm competitive, so we are always doing competitive activities, fun fact.

Yeah, I've got a night out on the town. Haven't done that in a while. Hopefully I can stay up for it (Laughter.) And wear a nontennis outfit. I'm so excited. (Laughter.)

Q. When you took the decision this was going to be your last year, did you set yourself any sort of targets or goals? Was there a sense of, yeah, I really want to win a big one in this last year? Does that change a little bit now?

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah, I mean, I have always wanted to win every tournament that I have signed up for, but I do think that because it is my last year, I'm like, you know, I really want to try to win a Masters 1000 this year. That's really important to me. That's something that I talked a lot about with everybody close to me.

I really wanted to make a push to be able to, like, bring out my best tennis. I'm so glad that I have been able to figure

out some of the physical things I have needed to do to kind of peak at the right time and to feel like I'm ready to go.

I certainly did that this tournament, but it has been a goal, yeah. So I got to tick it off the list.

Q. If you think about your state of mind two weeks ago, beginning this tournament, what was the vibe? Did you consider yourself as a contender? Did you feel that you were about to play very good tennis? What was the point two weeks ago arriving here?

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah, two weeks ago looked a little different. I was coming off a back injury that happened in Austin. I was devastated not to be able to finish out that tournament, because that's also a really important event for me. It's one of my home tournaments and one of my favorite events of the year.

Then I went to Indian Wells and had multiple days off in a row. I had a few days, not exaggerating, I literally, like, couldn't walk. I was having to have my boyfriend help me a lot. It was awful. There were a lot of tears about, oh, my gosh, I have played all these tournaments, I have worked so hard for this, and now we're at Indian Wells and Miami and this is happening, like, why?

Luckily with I think the help of the physical therapy and chiropractor we were able to kind of get it under control and make some adjustments too with some of my training and recovery and got it to a place where it was more manageable. After Indian Wells I was able to get a couple good days of practice.

I felt pretty confident, but it was still, like, not, you know, honestly it wasn't, like, the amount of time that I was practicing on court and the type of drills that we were doing, I was, like, this is going to be hard, like, going into Miami. I don't feel like we had a practice where I physically really exerted myself. That made me a little nervous.

When I came out in the first round I had a tough match against Pera, a really tricky player, a lefty. I was happy to really get through that. But I also did a great job of putting all that fear of, oh, am I doing enough, am I not doing enough, am I too injured, am I too this, too that? I think so much of what we do we're like perfectionists out there. We want perfect preparation, we want the perfect warmup, we want the perfect practice, we want feeling perfect all the time.

I think what makes some of these players, like, the best in the world is that they learn how to play around those things. That's the thing that I have learned the most this tournament is, okay, it's never going to be 100% and

you've got to figure out a way to, even though you have those challenges, work through it and get through it.

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