

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

## Darren Cahill

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: (Off microphone.)

DARREN CAHILL: (Off microphone.)

He's playing the right way. And tactically I thought he played great today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Congratulations obviously on this win. I read today that he kind of forgot his trophy when he won Australian Open, kind of left it, gave it to the manager. Kind of just talk about that, keeping your feet on the ground, that sensation that he has. Where do you think it comes from? What do you think is his ceiling? What we are seeing right now is very, very impressive.**

DARREN CAHILL: Yeah, he didn't forget the Australian Open trophy. He hung on to that for dear life. Then the tournament took it away from him to send it to him. So he knew where it was going.

He treasures these trophies. He understands that what he's doing is privileged. He's getting to play a sport that he loves and do it at the highest order. He's loving every piece of his life at the moment.

He appreciates every single moment that is happening to him at the moment, but he's also got his feet on the ground knowing it's just a sport, it's just a tennis match, and beyond this, whilst he's professional in everything he does, he enjoys his life. He's a normal 22-year-old kid. There's a lot to learn from him, a lot of good to learn from both him and Carlos. I think they're very similar in many, many ways.

That's why I think tennis is in great hands at the moment with the likes of those two and many other players coming through that are going to carry the torch through a generation we have been so fortunate to sit through the last 20 years. It's important to have these types of sports people coming through.

**Q. Congratulations. I was going to ask you the same question I asked Grigor, which is that you have seen**

**the best players to ever play in their prime, coached some of them. How do you compare what Jannik is bringing onto the court right now in terms of the level and the sort of way he's overpowering opponents and just overwhelming them to what you have seen in the past? Can you compare it to anything? How does that get sustained?**

DARREN CAHILL: Well, I don't think anybody should be comparing this generation yet to the generation that we have just seen with Novak, who is still playing, with Federer, Nadal, who is still playing. What they were able to achieve for so many years is remarkable.

I don't think we will ever see that domination again no matter what. So to be able to coach through that, to live through it, to watch it as a fan, it's been remarkable how they have pushed their frontier of the game and made everyone more professional and made everybody play better.

What you are seeing with the players coming through now is a direct result of their professionalism, of the teams they put together, the way they have tried to inch out every piece of improvement in each of their games. They've got big teams. They go from the physio to the mental coach to a couple of tennis coaches now to a fitness trainer.

You're trying to tick every single box to maximize a player's career. So this generation is copying and they're doing pretty much the same thing. But I wouldn't start comparing what Carlos or Jannik or Holger or these types of players are doing just yet to the generation prior, because I think that's unfair. They need time to establish themselves. But the level is right up there, and it's a good level, but they need to win a lot more before you start comparing them to those boys.

**Q. Congratulations. You have done it all: A player, broadcaster, coach. What level of satisfaction does this bring you to have such a great young player and to be able to bring him along to the level where he has this extraordinary ability and be able to make this happen as part of his coaching team?**



DARREN CAHILL: Yeah, he's a great kid and a great young man. It's been a pleasure to be involved with him for just under two years now.

We have a great team, and so as I have said many times before, Simone Vagnozzi is the main coach of this team. Nothing changes whether or not Simone is here or not. Simone is still the voice. He and I do a lot of the game planning, a lot of the tactical and technical work, we talk it through, but Simone is still the main voice. He's largely responsible for what you're seeing from Jannik and his improvements.

Together with Umberto, the fitness trainer, we've got Giacomo, the physio here, Andrea is the other physio as well. It's a great Italian team. They are good men, good people. They enjoy every piece of the success with Jannik. Jannik I think around that feels like he's covered, he's well cared for. That's the most important thing when you have a good team around you.

For us, for me personally it's been a little bit different, because my role is a bit different in this particular one compared to my previous coaching roles, but I'm thoroughly enjoying it. I think the Italians are calling me Papa a little bit on social media. I'm kind of the papa of this team as well, overseeing a lot of the decision-making of everything that goes on.

It's been nice to be able to step back a little bit. You still have the responsibility, but certainly be able to step back a little bit and watch a great coach in Simone do what he's been able to do and make a lot of changes to Jannik's game that have now come to fruition.

**Q. If you look at his record over the last few months, 22 of 23 this year and 25, 26, whatever it is, late last year, on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the best, where would you put him at the moment, and how much better and greater can he be?**

DARREN CAHILL: From where he is at the moment, right now he's playing his hand. You can't sugar-coat it. He's playing great, and his level today was fantastic. But he can get better.

As evolution goes along and you get a little bit older and stronger and faster and get a bit smarter, all those things are going to start to come into his game.

We have been working on improving his serve, improving his transition game, improving his slice backhand to use it as a changeup shot, improving his direction on his forehand, return of serve. You can go through everybody's game.

It's the great thing about Novak as well. Novak at 36 years of age is still looking for improvement in his game, and we know that he's going to make adjustments. We know that Medvedev will make adjustments. We know that changes will be made. Carlos continues to look for improvements in his serve. It's just normal.

I had a chance to work with Agassi when he was 32 years of age. The moment I stepped on the court with Andre, it was all business and he wanted to become better as a tennis player at 32, better than he was at 22.

So this generation is privileged to have seen the previous generations push for improvements no matter how old you are. That's what Jannik will do. So yes, he can get better for sure. But we've got to give credit where credit is due. He's playing terrific tennis at the moment.

**Q. In the game today, you mentioned obviously his age at 22, but you see it in the match today he's just able to stay in the moment. What stands out to you when he is just in the moment and unbothered at times?**

DARREN CAHILL: A lot of belief in the moment, hasn't he? Finish to the year last year helped him a lot. He's matured a lot in the last 12 months.

I think doing what he did in Turin, in Italy, getting through to the final, backing it up and winning Davis Cup with his team for Italy was a huge moment for him. He was able to carry that belief through to the Australian Open.

Now when he steps onto any court in the world against any player in the world, he respects everybody, but he fears no one. That's really important is that when you step out there, you're ready to give it your best.

Some days you'll come out the backhand on the wrong side, and that's completely fine, and you go away and learn from it, but most days when you're playing that level he's playing at, he's going to have a good day. And today was a good day.

**Q. I remember last year a couple of losses from Jannik against Cerundolo in Rome, Sascha in US Open. He was struggling physically. How to improve his fitness, his nutrition, his habits? Because he's really seemed a lot strong physically on the court obviously with his play but also physically. Thank you.**

DARREN CAHILL: Two words: Umberto Ferrara, the physical trainer. He's been a genius in what he's been able to do. Also, I think it's really important that anybody,

when you come in to a team, is that firstly you map out the progress that you need to make. You're very clear on the training that he needed to do. You don't try to pack in six months of work into two months. You break down the athlete. Umberto has been unbelievable in that.

It's been a consistent training regime now from the moment we started nearly two years ago to what you see now with Jannik. Umberto has been able to map out the training. Jannik is committed to it. It's not easy. So Jannik has bought in, he's committed to doing the work. Now he's starting to reap the benefits of a lot of work from what he started two years ago.

He will continue to do that, and hopefully he will continue to be a better athlete. More important than anything, he's able to understand his body much better now, as well. He understands when he's getting a slight strain or a bit of a niggle or a little bit of cramp or whatever it might be, and then there are some things you need to worry about; some things you don't.

I think previously he used to worry about a lot of the little feelings he had with his body. Now he has a lot more confidence in his body, and that's thanks to the work he's done with Umberto.

**Q. First talk about what have you brought to Jannik personally that he didn't have before he started with you? How tough is it to stay unbiased when you're broadcasting as opposed to coaching him?**

DARREN CAHILL: Well, I don't broadcast his matches, so that's easy. If I talk about him on the broadcast, I talk about him like I'm doing right here as a coach. So trying to give as much information as I can. My bias goes out the window, because I'm trying to pump him up obviously.

I have only good things to say about him, as well. My commentary when I work for ESPN is about other players and other matches. We try to stay away from that as possible. But as everybody knows, I'm one of the coaches of Jannik Sinner, so we're very careful to make sure that we don't cross that over.

What have I brought to him? I hope a lot of little things. It's hard to put down on paper exactly what that might be or what the main thing might be, but I would say just a little bit of belief, to be honest.

He's already had a great game. He was coached by Riccardo Piatti for many, many years. Riccardo did an amazing job with him. As happens in the coaching industry, there is a certain time frame where maybe a new set of eyes and a new voice is good for the player. Jannik

decided a couple years ago to do that, and that's when he brought in Simone.

With Simone and myself, we have been able to map out a plan as to how to tactically play matches, where he needs to improve his game a little bit, build himself up physically, how does he approach his professionalism, just everything about his career.

I think that, as I said before, my role is more of an overseeing role but certainly an important role, because it gives him the belief that we are taking care of him in all aspects.

Again, Simone has been the major reason you're seeing the type of tennis you're seeing from Jannik. He deserves a lot of credit.

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