

# BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 19, 2022

## Taylor Fritz

Press Conference



T. FRITZ/A. Rublev

7-5, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Taylor is in his first Masters 1000 ATP final and first American to reach the final here since John Isner 2012 to try to become the first American man to win the title here since Agassi in 2001.

Taylor, talk about getting to your first Masters 1000 final and the win today.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, it's awesome. I feel like I've served really well all week, maybe didn't, prior to today didn't play like my best tennis from the back of the court, but I feel like a little bit of that was nerves, kind of seeing the draw open up, you know, playing these matches where I kind of, like big matches where I kind of expect myself to win.

And then today was a bit different. I knew that I had to play to a certain level. I couldn't kind of play the way I was playing previous matches. So I played by far my best match today from the ground, especially. Hit the ball really well. So definitely kind of the confidence booster I need going into the final to like feel like I am really playing my best tennis.

**Q. Two things: Firstly, how important was it getting that early lead; and secondly, are you able to put into words what it was like on that match point?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah. Well, the early lead was great. I started out playing really well, kind of imposing my game. I had a clear kind of strategy and I stuck to it really well the whole time, but did an especially good job in the beginning. It was really frustrating not serving out the set the first time around. I just didn't, I mean, he hit a ridiculous return on break point.

But I also just didn't really make enough first serves that game, didn't get the free points I needed. So it was really frustrating getting broken there, but rebounded nicely to take the set.

And then on that match point, I mean, I kind of like tweaked my ankle the game before on my serve and it wasn't really hurting once I got started with the point, I felt like, but it was really bothering me on the push-off step trying to return serve.

So I didn't know how many more looks I would get. I felt like returning a first serve would be really rough for me just because of the pain when I was pushing off that game. So if anything, I want to say it helped me because it forced me to be aggressive. I told myself that because of what's going on I kind of just have to take a shot here and I really trust my backhand line return. I missed definitely one, maybe two of 'em, prior in the match and, honestly, that gave me even more, it sounds stupid but gave me more confidence to go for it there because I can't think of a time when I take that second serve backhand line, I can't think of a time where I missed it like three or four times in a row, so I figured go for it again and probably make it.

**Q. The excitement of actually clinching that match point?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, when I hit it, as soon as I hit the ball I was like, I think that's going to be good enough to win the point, and then, yeah, as soon as I saw that he hit it and it wasn't going to go on the court, I was just like, you know, so much relief and like, I mean, I just couldn't, you know, couldn't believe it.

It's like, I said it yesterday, it's like those moments are like the reason why I wanted to be an athlete, wanted to play professional tennis. It's the best part of it all.

**Q. When you get on a roll like this and you're winning big matches do things start to clear up for you in your head when you're on the court? Do you start to see things clear, see your game plan?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: Today I definitely did. Today I felt much more just calm and at ease and was thinking very clearly on the court because of, like I said, just the nerves weren't there today as much as any of the other matches. They were, because the other matches I am expecting myself to win.



So I'm definitely playing a bit tighter tennis, and today, like I just knew what I had to do and I didn't maybe expect as much of myself. Obviously I was the, I was not the favorite in today's match, and so I was able to play a little freer.

And, yeah, like everything was definitely like flowing for me, a lot like how it was towards the end of last year and in Australia this year. Everything just was, I'm making quick decisions, not second-guessing myself, and everything's kind of just flowing.

**Q. Can you look back for me at 2020, the final you played with Rafa in Acapulco. What do you remember from that final and if you do happen to face Mr. Nadal tomorrow do you think that will help you immensely?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: I remember I felt like he kind of just played high spinny balls to me and almost just, he like actually just gave me a lot of forehands in my favorite spot, like the shoulder-high one to like kind of slap flat, and he, I think he literally just kept doing it until like I missed eventually. He's giving me almost like, almost, I felt like almost bating me to go for it.

I feel like if I wasn't making the mistakes, he would have kicked it up a level. But I feel like that was kind of just like his safe game plan and like see if I beat him doing that before he turned it up and really started like doing more.

But yeah, I mean, I kind of beat myself trying to fire off winners against him. So I think my level's so much higher than then, so I won't, maybe won't be feeling like I need to pull the trigger so much, need to do so much. Like, I can kind of just play more within myself if I do play Rafa.

**Q. Reaching the finals is obviously big and you talked about, yesterday you were at this tournament for years as a kid and everything. But the danger, and we have seen this in so many sports, you want to get there, but you have the next match or the next game. You can get yourself ready?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: What?

**Q. In other words, it's a step you've taken. Now the danger is, quote, you know, not, hey, I made it. Well, you got to the final against probably Rafa.**

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, I mean, we'll see who I play in the final. But like, it's not like the tennis season is one or two tournaments. This is a long season. So I'm going to go out, play the final tomorrow just like I played the match today. If I win that's awesome. If I lose, whatever. Like, it's a good week. I'm going to go just play my style of

tennis and I'm not going to let the moment, really try not to let the moment affect me.

It's a great start to the year either way, and regroup, build on it, and kind of keep these results coming the rest of the year. And one thing that's awesome is I feel like, I really do feel like once you have certain results, for me anyways, it makes it, once I do things I feel like it makes it a lot easier for me to repeat it and do it again, once I kind of have that confidence that I've been there before.

And I actually said that before this tournament in regards to like making the semis. I made the semis once, so once I do things once, I feel like I can do it again, totally not expecting to make the semis again, but kind of proving my point that once, for me, when I'm able to accomplish something I feel like it makes it a lot easier to kind of repeat the process. So hopefully I can kind of keep doing that throughout the year regardless of the result tomorrow.

**Q. What's the best and worse thing about playing Rafa?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: The worst thing is probably just knowing that he's just going to keep fighting, he's always going to be there every point, he's not going to like give you anything, it's just the competitiveness, like he's always going to want it so bad.

The best thing, I would say, is maybe just, I don't know, I mean, from my standpoint, maybe I'm not going to get completely like served off the court, I can potentially get looks at return games.

But he's such a good returner that it kind of works the other way, he's going to get looks at my serves. I've been serving great all week, but he'll still return my serve.

**Q. Whether it's Rafa or Roger or Novak, when you watch those guys, whether it's on the practice court or in matches, there's just such intelligence there and I just wonder when you watch those guys at that caliber, what you take away most from that?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: I think if I'm watching all three of them the takeaway is how amazing it is that you can have three guys that are so incredibly good, that all have a completely different process of going about their training and their business and how there's not one way or one thing that, like, that's, like, that's like what they do to like become the best. It's really interesting seeing how they all have different processes. Roger's much more relaxed and calm and Rafa's extremely intense and like it's just really cool seeing that they all kind of have their own way that works for them and as a younger player it's good knowing that

you do what kind of works for you.

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