

BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, March 20, 2022

Taylor Fritz

Press Conference



T. FRITZ/R. Nadal

6-3, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Taylor is the first American to win an ATP Masters 1000 since John Isner won Miami in 2018. First American to win the title here since Andre Agassi 2001.

Taylor, talk about the incredible day today, how everything transpired.

TAYLOR FRITZ: I mean, it was just an emotional roller coaster all day. These guys got a lot of cameras, so people will see actually what happened.

I knew I tweaked my ankle yesterday, but I didn't think too much of it. I thought I had things kind of hurt me, feel tweaked, I sleep it off, I'm kind of fine the next day. I kind of expected that to happen.

It wasn't till I got on the court to warm up. Took one push-off step, like, hard, I literally screamed. I tried it twice more. Both times, like, the worst pain imaginable. I was really upset, basically almost crying because I thought I was going to have to pull out.

I went to the doctor. We did a lot of work on it. I numbed it. We tried to numb it up and stuff like that. Kind of went out there again after maybe like an hour of work. I started hitting. I realized, like, wow, maybe I can actually play.

I had this, like, feeling of, like, hope kind of the next time I went back on the practice court. It was a game-time decision. A lot of members of my team wanted me to not play the match. I'm never going to let them forget that because I went on the court and it was a complete non-issue, didn't feel it at all, didn't hinder me at all.

I know Rafa was dealing with some things as well. I can't imagine how banged up someone's body must be after 20-something straight matches, playing as much as he has.

Yeah, I mean, I'm just so lucky I was able to go out there,

play, play really well, and not be hindered at all by something that I thought was going to keep me from even going on the court.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. When you consider all that, are you able to put into words what your emotions really are like?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I mean, no. It's like after the match I kept saying, I'm going to cuss, but I said no Fing way, no Fing way, I can't believe it's real. I signed the camera, I just put question marks. Stunned. Couldn't even believe it.

Seriously, this is seriously like a childhood dream come true, like a wild dream you never expect to actually happen. It really hasn't even sunk in.

Q. Back to what the members of your team were saying, how much of a back and forth was it?

TAYLOR FRITZ: Well, if the last feeling I had was my first warmup, then I just know I couldn't have gone on the court. But after the second time we tried it, after playing around with it, a lot of different things, around the ankle, trying to make me feel better, I really felt like a lot better. I just told them, Look, like, maybe we make it worse, maybe we don't, but I came this far. The way it feels right now, I'd be thinking about it for a long time if I don't at least go out and try to play. That's what I told them. They said they don't agree but they'll back my decision.

I apologized to them for being so incredibly stubborn. In the end, I am glad I made this decision. We'll see how it is tomorrow. I have an MRI tomorrow. Hopefully I can play Miami. It's obviously questionable right now. I feel bad for those guys, I'm so stubborn.

I went out there and I seriously played the match with zero pain.

Q. You talk about those dreams. What did those tennis dreams look like for you when you were a kid? Could you ever have imagined it, a win like this, coming against somebody of Rafa's caliber?

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

TAYLOR FRITZ: No, I think to do it against Rafa in the end, that's like the, I don't know, icing on the cake. It's just insane. Someone that I watched like dominate, win everything. Him and Roger, I grew up, I didn't watch a ton of tennis growing up, but it's tough to not know these guys, knowing they're literally winning everything, their Grand Slam finals, all their battles. It's insane to even be on the same court with these people, much less be able to beat one of them, to win such a big tournament. To do it here in Indian Wells, as well, the combination of all these crazy things that I never thought possible.

Q. A lot has been said about this generation of American men's tennis. What does this win do for the group?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I don't know. I think maybe it shows everyone that it's possible. I mean, I already knew it was possible. Reilly made finals of Toronto last year, I made the semis here last year.

I think the level's there. The margins in tennis are so small, a lot of it is just, like, a lot of the difference is the confidence and belief to do it. That was one of the biggest things I was fighting today, was just to, like, believe that I could beat him.

Yeah, I think this group we have is amazing. I think hopefully there's going to be a lot more big results amongst all of us.

Q. You are famous for your comeback after the injury at the French Open. You did it again here. Talk about your ability to come back. Secret sauce? Do you try to give it a positive mindset?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I think I'm an extremely stubborn person. I also think I have a very high, very high pain tolerance and not a lot of regard for potentially damaging myself worse if I think there's a chance I can get on the court and play.

It's probably a lot of not-so-good things that get me on the court. Honestly, literally I was thinking about what I was going to have to say to the crowd if I pulled out. I was going to say, like, I came back after the surgery, I didn't pull out in Toronto when I was literally seeing fuzzy and almost blacking out last year. It takes a lot to get me to not take the court.

The way I felt in my first original warmup was about as bad as I could feel, about as bad as I could, like, imagine myself feeling. It was definitely going to keep me off the court. I don't honestly know how it was possible that it went from as bad as it was to as good as it was.

Obviously thank the physios and the doctors. They did an amazing job. Yeah, I'm really fortunate.

Q. What do you think you can go on to achieve yourself now that you've won this title and proven you can beat Rafa in such a big match?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I don't want to get ahead of myself. I want to take things one step at a time. My goal for the last couple months has been top 10. This obviously helps a lot, helps a lot to kind of put me closer to that goal. That's going to remain the goal for now, top 10.

Obviously I'd love to go way higher than that and achieve way more than that. Like I said, take it one step at a time, not get ahead of myself, it's just one tournament. Go back to work, never be satisfied with the good results. Just keep wanting more.

Goal is still to get to the top 10, then after that we'll reevaluate. Maybe top five will be after that.

Q. Have you talked to your parents? What did each of them have to say?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I mean, they're just really proud of me. My dad brought me here as a kid. He told me that I was going to win this tournament one day when I was a little kid. It was pretty tough not being emotional with my parents, especially my dad. He was just really, really proud of me. It's really tough to get a compliment out of him (smiling).

Q. What parts of your game have you improved on that have allowed you to play so well in this tournament?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I've been saying for months it's been since the last edition of this tournament, it's been the forehand that's really been clicking for me. Just being able to unload and trust it. It used to be a shot that would just misfire, almost like lose me matches. Now it's like I can trust it no matter what to really pull the trigger on a big point, get extra free points.

I served pretty solid all week. Today was a little difficult because of how windy it was. I had to serve for percentage rather than actually hitting aces.

Also just the big thing is just playing the big points better, kind of coming out of these really tight matches that could go either way. I feel like I was losing a lot of just that little bit of difference, couple extra shots. Confidence, trusting it. Like I said, there's such small margins in tennis. It

seems like I'm just getting over the hump the other way this last couple months.

Q. You said one of the biggest challenges was for you to get yourself to believe you could beat Rafa today.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah.

Q. How were you able to get there, get that belief?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I just kept trying to self-talk myself, like this is my time, this is my match, I'm going to win it, this is it. There's no reason why it can't be me.

I just kept trying to, like, just kept telling myself there's no reason why I can't win this. I just kept telling myself that I can do it.

Q. When did you realize that Rafa was going through some physical issues as well? How did that affect the way you played today?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I mean, I knew there was something before the match. Obviously he got worked on with Carlos. I don't think I'll ever pull out. Like I try never to pull out in matches. I know Rafa doesn't. If he takes the court, he's going to play.

I knew there was some stuff going on. I've heard there's been stuff kind of going on all week since he pulled out of Miami pretty early on. He kept winning. I didn't let it change how I was going to play at all. I treated it like I was playing the Rafa that I know, that everybody knows.

Obviously if he's on the court playing, then he feels good enough to win. I have to treat it like that.

Q. It's fair to say a dad can tell his son, hey, kid, you're going to win this tournament. When did you really sense you could win a big tournament? When did you first have that thought?

TAYLOR FRITZ: Honestly, I don't know. Maybe like right before I won the match (smiling). Maybe when I was in the semis or finals. Maybe when I saw people that I knew I could beat also having these kind of big results.

Yeah, it's definitely, definitely recently that I've realized the potential.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports