

# BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 11, 2023

## Taylor Fritz

Press Conference



T. FRITZ/B. Shelton

4-6, 6-4, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Great comeback for you to start defending your title here in Indian Wells. How do you feel right now?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I feel really good. Just getting through that match, I think that was an incredibly tough first match for me to play. He's really tough, and, you know, all it took in the first set was one breakpoint, one break, and I never really had any other chances to get onto his serve.

You know, really happy to get through that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. What's your long-term opinion of Shelton and his potential? Where would you rank him among the young Americans or young guys in general?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: He's really good. I think it's too early to tell. I think it's a really dangerous thing that people do putting crazy expectations on young American players. He's really talented. He's super dangerous if he's playing well, just with the serve and the weapons that he has.

Like I said, you make one mistake on my serve, make one mistake on my serve in the first set and drop it, and the set is over. He's serving way too well.

He definitely has a really bright future. He's got a super explosive game and he has a lot of stuff that he can still -- a lot of stuff that he will improve on.

**Q. Do you feel like the leader of American men's tennis? Do you like being in that position?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: The leader, obviously I'm the top-ranked. I mean, who knows what it's gonna be in a year or two. I can see different parts of the years where just depending on defending points, keeping points, where other people take the spot, but I don't know.

There is a lot of really good American players and it's exciting to see. I'm very, I guess, happy, honored, fortunate to be at the top of it right now. But I wouldn't, I guess, think of like a leader. I'm the highest-ranked.

**Q. You just mentioned, Hey, we put all these crazy expectations on young tennis players. You might say that that's done in other sports. People wondered how the young LeBron would do or Mahomes or whatever. What do you think that's about? Do you think that's just the nature of sports, human nature? Or is it particular to our sport?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: It happens in every sport, I think. Yeah, I mean, it happens in every sport. There is a lot of expectations put on people.

I just speak to it, because for me, I felt like it was something that I maybe wasn't ready for when I was 18, 19, and I think I was too young at the time to, I guess, properly deal with it. I think it probably hurt me.

I see it hurt a lot of young players, because one of the most dangerous things that you can be dealing with in sports is having a lot of expectations and having a lot of pressure. It stops you from sometimes playing and competing as freely as you would like.

It's a pretty common thing, though, obviously.

**Q. Talk a little bit more about the pressure. Three or four years ago you're out there on the court, you're feeling not very well. You're losing, blah, blah, blah. But all of a sudden it feels like you are locked in, playing more consistent.**

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, I think, look, I think for me what made me a really good player and gave me a lot of success early on when I was 17 or 18 was how aggressive I was and how big I was hitting the ball. You know, I could do that because I was free. I was, like, I'm not supposed to beat these guys, I'm the younger guy.

Then all of a sudden I remember thinking this, I had, you know, some good wins when I was 18. One year later



when I was 19, I barely beat a guy that I was supposed to beat. I thought to myself, wow, if I had this win one year ago, it would have been the best one of my whole life. We're only a year now in the future and I'm supposed to win that. It's bad if I don't win that match.

So I just feel like there was a lot of pressure on me, and it just tightened me up. I wasn't playing my game as much as I guess should have. I got away from playing what made me good.

Like I said, some deal with it better than others. I think, you know, at the age of 17, 18, 19, maybe you're not the most well-equipped to deal with that stuff. Now it's different now, I'm older and the pressure I feel is just the pressure that I put on myself. I don't care about what other people are saying and what pressure other people may be putting on me to succeed. That's kind of just a lesson you need to learn.

**Q. Is that something you'd go back and change or do you feel you had to go through that process?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: I mean, yeah, I wish I would have cared a lot less about all that stuff when I was younger, and I think that I could have had, you know, the progress in my game that I've had in the last couple of years maybe sooner.

But I guess, I don't know, it's a lesson learned.

**Q. If you would, just go back to today's match. I mean, going in, tons of pressure, defending champion, home court, so to speak, out against a guy coming off a great Aussie run and bombing it. But you hung in there great. Are you satisfied about your fight and your consistency in coming back? Just talk about that dynamic.**

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, I'm super happy with how I didn't panic under the circumstances of being down a set. The guy's serving bombs, not winning points on his serve, obviously defending champion, a lot of pressure, he's playing well. I didn't panic. I stayed calm. I changed some things around. I kind of just figured out how I wanted to play and what I needed to do to get those service breaks and get myself back into the match.

I'm super happy to come through a really, really tough second-round match.

**Q. A little bit on how you tweaks, what changes.**

TAYLOR FRITZ: I couldn't return a serve in the first set. Also, he was killing me with the kick serve. A big change I

made was moving up a lot closer and just holding a backhand grip, and if he was going to hit the flat bomb to my forehand, I was just going to try to chip it low, because it's not like I'd have the time to take a swing on my forehand anyway when it's coming 140 miles an hour.

Then if he serves a big one on my backhand, I already have the backhand grip. I took the returns early and shortened up the swings to put more in the court, and I thought that made a big difference in just making him play a bit more and me putting more returns in the court.

**Q. Do you return much better now than you did four years ago?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, for sure, I think one of the biggest improvements in my game from two years ago is the return, I think. Before I would only stand up and stand in the same position and try to return. I think I have made some tweaks to where I stand. I can mix up where I stand, as well. I definitely put way more returns in the court than I used to, for sure.

**Q. How was it being the defending champ? Was it fun playing as the defending champ? Was it a burden thinking about defending a thousand points? What was the dynamic?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: I'm trying not to think too much about defending a thousand points, because, you know, how all the players like to think, I would say, how I think is every year you start over at zero, and the race is the race. That will be the rankings at the end of the year.

Yeah, I'm defending a thousand points, but I'm also six in the race this year. Let's just have a good result. Let's keep moving, let's keep a good position in the race, and we'll go from there.

It felt great, I guess, winning the match and walking out on court and the crowd cheering, like that brought back really amazing memories from last year, and just kind of like playing my home tournament I was very happy to be back, I've been happy all week to be here. I'm trying not to stress too much about the defending a thousand points, because at the end of the day, it is about the race.

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