

BNP Paribas Open

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Frances Tiafoe

Press Conference



F. TIAFOE/C. Norrie

6-4, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Congrats, Frances. This is your best result at Indian Wells and also any other Masters 1000. What has been working so well for you?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, I just think the vibes all around. I've been super happy being here, I think the experience on and off court. Yeah, I think getting three solid wins before today comfortably, you know, I have a lot in the tank.

Yeah, I think every win builds more and more confidence, get more and more comfortable. Here we are.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Cam is not that easy to push or rush, but seems like you hugged the baseline, attacked. Are you doing that more than you were a couple years ago?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Absolutely, absolutely. I'm using my speed a lot more to be aggressive, not just to react to balls and out the corners and stuff. I'm doing that much better now. Using my speed to be aggressive, coming forward much more, sticking volleys, and just being athletic out there.

It's tough for guys. I'm really coming at you. Yeah, he didn't have any response for me today. Cam's going to be Cam and make it tough for me at the end. I blinked a little there at the end, but for the most part I thought it was one-way traffic.

Q. You've been doing so well. You've seen what Taylor has done. You had the US Open result, Laver Cup. You just said there's still a lot of work to do. Tough question, but what are the next one or two things you have to do to get to the very top?

FRANCES TIAFOE: One or two things, there's two more rounds here, right? I mean, winning events like these is pretty much -- the more and more you put yourself in

positions like these, the more and more you have chances to win these events and cross the line, right? To get to that top echelon of the game, you need to win tournaments like these.

Being in semis is great. I'm very happy to be here. It's just semifinals. There's more to do. It only gets tougher. Beating quality guys only gets tougher.

Take it for what is. I'm happy for every milestone, humbled, and very, you know, very thankful for the opportunity, but gotta keep the head down and keep going.

Q. Can you speak about your relationship with your coach. How did he help you to make a step forward?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, yeah, just training more than anything, right, taking ownership of my career. Just being professional day in, day out, you know, on the court, off the court, and getting proper rest. You know, be on time, doing things the right way. You know, things you eat, everything.

So, you know, I think all that has kind of helped me grow on and off court. That's kind of -- it shows. I'm not playing as many loose points as I was before. I'm very much focused. I'm still getting the crowd into it but I'm very in it, in the match.

Yeah, I think he has a very different personality than I do. His Joe Sergeant kind of attitude helps me quite a lot.

Q. Taylor's title here last year, was that a little bit of an eye-opener or a spark for you?

FRANCES TIAFOE: No, not really. Just happy for him. It's just a moment that's huge. One of us won a Masters Series. I think for a long time Taylor and I, you know, something that he's done, something that I do, we kind of just been one-upping each other.

We were both 18, 19, those two guys, get in the top 100, and we've always kind of been pushing each other, whether we realize it or not. I think, yeah, it's only going to help us for years to come.



But yeah, you know, not necessarily seeing him do that sparks me. I'm happy for him. It helps me believe. You know, I'm like, Taylor Fritz can do this, why not?

But everyone's time is different. My time was the Open, and so on and so forth. His time was here last year. Tommy, his time was in Australia. Everyone is going to have their moment, but I think seeing guys you grew up with do X, Y, Z, that helps you, for sure. There's no doubt about it.

Q. You said you were having a good experience off court. Could you be more specific?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I'm having great experiences off court (smiling). I mean, life has been good. Obviously went to the NBA All-Star Game.

Q. Specifically at this tournament, what...

FRANCES TIAFOE: Oh, you're talking -- okay, okay, okay. I'm staying at a pretty sweet place (smiling) at Zenyara. I've been really relaxed. Playing pickleball, I've been posting up near the lake, I did bow and arrows the other day, I was on a dune buggy. We got a sweet place over there at the estate, so I've been feeling pretty good and pretty relaxed once we get on the ground. I think that helps.

Q. You were just saying about taking ownership of your career. What would you say might have been the catalyst or the flick of the switch that maybe helped to change things or register it a bit more in your mind?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, you've got to think, right, you know, I'm a guy came from very humble beginnings. I came on the scene, I was 18 years old, 19 years old, in top 100. Guys thinking I'm gonna be the guy to do it, X, Y, and Z, American hope, blah, blah, blah. It was tough. I don't think I was really ready for it.

You know, I was, you know, a young guy having money, I was enjoying my life, you know, outside activities and stuff like that. Now I just honed it in.

I think the main thing was, you know, these guys ahead of me, seeing guys I grew up with, playing juniors with, Andrey, Zverev, Tsitsipas, am I just gonna let these guys take all the money out here for years to come? Because, I mean, I played these guys and beat them on the odd occasion, but I just wasn't doing these kind of things and winning consistent matches. I was like, All right, I mean, something's gotta give here.

And I love this game too much to not figure it out. Yeah, hiring Wayne, you know, he's getting a tight team around me. Just holding myself accountable and just having that curiosity of how good I can be at this game.

You know, I got a, you know, gift from the man above and I just want to see what I can do with this game. I owe it a lot.

Q. There wasn't one specific moment or match or tournament that changed it around, or was there?

FRANCES TIAFOE: You could probably say maybe at Vienna run, maybe. Beat a lot of quality guys that week. Then started 2022 with some injuries. You know, that was tough.

Probably that week where I was like, Okay, I can play with these guys for real when I'm locked in.

Q. At the All-Star Game in LA, you have been loving hoops for a long, long time. Aside from all the fun of it, it's an incredible game with LeBron's athleticism, Steph's draining shots. Are there things you can take away or impresses you about basketball, executing that draft at crunch time?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I guess I love hoops just because of the athleticism. I guess everything around it, fashion, music, like, everyone just loves hoops. I think bringing people together, bringing cities together.

But I think more within that, within falling in love with it, I think everyone being at great at something has the same mindset no matter what you are, if you're a painter or whatever you are. There's a certain level of focus and commitment to whatever your craft is.

Getting to know those guys and seeing that it's not a cliché thing, it's the same message, that anyone who is great, obviously, doing your business each and every day, the sacrifice you have to make for it. It's funny, your parents tell you the same shit all the time, but when you hear it from Steph Curry or you hear it from LeBron, it's a little different. I'm sorry. Sorry, mom. Sorry, dad. It's a little different hearing it from them. When they tell me that, yeah, I think it's time to make some sacrifice (smiling).

No, it's all good fun. But, yeah, it's just interesting how, like, you know there is no secret sauce. You've just got to get in there and do the unseen hours. What you do in the dark will come to the light.

Q. What would be the number one thing you want to achieve more than anything else, just one?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Win a Grand Slam. Be No. 1 in the world, great, but if I can walk away from the game, I won a slam, I will sleep totally well at night. No one's gonna tell me shit. I'm gonna be, Oh, I'm a Grand Slam champion. I will be pumped, preferably US Open.

Yeah, that's to go. And I'm in semis at Indian Wells, so why not try to win Indian Wells first? Yeah, I mean, I think that's the one thing I want to actually, to win a Grand Slam.

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