

BNP Paribas Open

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Stefanos Tsitsipas

Press Conference



S. TSITSIPAS/F. Tiafoe

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THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. How did that feel today? Just curious, in addition to that, you play Frances a lot, how do you prepare for playing him and what kind of challenges does he present that makes him different from others?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: He presents a serious challenge, because he's one of those opponents that, you know, he plays looser than any other player on the tour, and I feel like sometimes that helps you play well. He kind of makes the pressure disappear off your shoulders, which I believe lets him play better in certain circumstances and periods of time.

So that makes him dangerous, because he has the tendency, you know, to mix up play, to come to the net. If he's on a good day with his serve, he can be a tricky player to play against. You can definitely see that with some of the matches that he has had against the top 3 in the past. He has stretched all of them to the very sort of limits within their game. Some of them he lost; some of them he won.

I'm happy with this victory because I had a good start. I maintained that throughout the match. Of course he was going to fight back at some point and present a more difficult challenge for me in the second set, and I fought back. I held serve, and I stayed really, like, committed to what I was doing. Definitely served big on those moments to kind of keep the lead, and had a great sense of concentration and fighting spirit from the very first point till the end.

Of course, I think the thing that I did very well today that stood out was getting those fresh shots, which was the serve and the return of serve. On both ends I was able to apply pressure and have a good, strong start.

Q. A little while ago you wrote your great letter to tennis where you said, Oh, it's my special playground, has no rules. My question sort of relates to that in that

you've now traveled for years to all the great sites in our sport. Many people feel this is a very special one. If I could put you on the spot, what letter would you write to Indian Wells?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Dear Indian Wells, Thanks for creating it. You've been mean to me in the past, but I still have lots of love for you, and I'm here to make up and create good memories together. So please give me your love, give me your full support, and I'm sure I'm going to be your special one (smiling).

Q. You got to play mixed doubles with Paula earlier in the week. Curious what that experience was like and what it has been like to support her through what has been a pretty frustrating time for her with the injuries?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: It does create a difficult time for not just Paula but me, as well, having to be there and keep pushing her to kind of get well and jump back on the court.

She's kind of been in and out. The most frustrating part about all of this is that she did play a few matches, and then she didn't feel that well again, so it has been a tricky time for both of us.

On my end, it's more, like, I'm trying to find the right words and the right things to say. Obviously when it does start in the beginning, you have a lot of faith in it and you're, like, Okay, you just need to stay committed in the process of healing and getting better. But after a while, there aren't many things you can say, because you are confused yourself with what's happening with the body.

I'm just there as much as I can to keep making her feel good that at least we are together and we're trying to find solution together.

However, I do feel like time will show, and soon I'm pretty sure she will be fully healed and be ready to go full again.

Q. When you play, I don't know if this is necessarily a function of your ranking dropping a little bit, but it's a third-round match, Frances is a really tough opponent in the third round. It's almost like something that you



would expect quarterfinal, fourth round. Is that something you had to get used to a little bit more, or is that in your head at all that just in this moment, tougher matches might come earlier for you?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Of course. It's part of the whole experience being outside of the top 10. That is what you subscribe to, not being within those high-ranked guys. That's what comes with it. Of course, I'm prepared for it, for any circumstance, and any new opening or anything different that might occur in my career, I just try and face it as good as I can and deal with it daily.

Q. Any advantage to it, getting these matches against good guys, especially if you get a win? Does it give you confidence for later?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Look, we have seen players that were in the top 10 and dropped out a little bit. Some of them much further. It can be tricky for those that are high ranked because some of the players do have that big tennis that they have, of course, once produced which kept them in the top 5 and they had big results. It may be something they work out at the time and kind of push them back in the rankings.

So there could be tricky matches, because I've had those actually in the past against players that do not deserve to be outside the top 20 or 30 and are way better than that in terms of tennis and experience.

These can be tricky matches, and I feel like being some sort of contender for that title, let's say, it does perhaps add a bit more pressure to the other guys, because of course I have proved myself over the last few years that I can be there. It's just that it hasn't worked out recently, and I'm not in the best sort of tennis shape that I've been in terms of the last months, yeah.

Q. Grigor Dimitrov was talking about the one-handed backhand yesterday, its beauty and just how complex it is, many different aspects to it. Could you talk about the one-handed backhand? Do you like it? Do you enjoy its complexity, its beauty, flexibility?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: It's a complex shot to master and to perfect, and it takes a lot of time to get to a point where you develop an amazing single-handed backhand, one that is a weapon, too.

Way more complaints, the double-handed backhand, I also think that people have the tendency to choose the double-handed backhand is obviously the ease of it, how less complex it is to learn and how you can always support your left hand to close out certain shots or save certain

shots that perhaps a single-handed backhand would slice instead.

So these are say some of the, let's say, advantages of it. Otherwise I do feel like it's the most beautiful shot in tennis. I do believe it's the most difficult thing to learn in tennis, but of course it has its rewards as sort of creating opportunities, opening up the court. I think it's a massive weapon for courts that have sort of a high response to the ball, especially clay courts, as well.

So I do find it a beautiful shot that also, if perfected in the right way, it can be a massive lethal weapon for those who feel confident hitting that shot.

Q. If you could start all over, would you choose the one-handed or two-handed?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Yes, I would start it. I feel like I am part of the players that carry on the legacy of the single-handed backhand. If it was not for me, if it was not for Grigor, if it was not for Lorenzo, if it was not for Richard, this shot would barely be seen on the tour.

Yes, it's an old-school shot, something that people used to play back in the day, but it has its modernity these days. It has evolved into a modern shot that looks way different than it was hundreds of years ago.

I do believe that more kids in the future would definitely decide to pursue a single-handed backhand and we might see that at big levels again, perhaps even a lot of players playing it inside the top 10 soon.

Thank you.

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