

# BNP Paribas Open

Monday, March 11, 2024

## Tommy Paul

Press Conference



T. PAUL/U. Humbert

6-4, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Tommy. Straight-set win. A tough opponent. How did you feel about your performance today?

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I thought I played really well. You know, I went down a break there like in the middle of the first set, and he's a tricky guy to break back.

I upped my energy and got kind of lucky to get that break back right away, and then really felt like I started getting on a roll. Kind of catching a read for his serve a little bit. Thought I put a lot more returns in the court. I thought that was a major difference.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. With all due respect to Nardi, I think you get the winner of Nardi-Novak now, let's pretend it's Novak. What do you think about if you're going into that match compared with where you were before you ever played him before like in Australia? That was the last time you played him, right?**

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, only time I ever played him. I'm super excited whether it's him or Nardi.

But, yeah, that's why we play tennis, play the biggest players on the biggest stages. We're in the States. Obviously he's got a lot of supporters everywhere he goes, but I like to think that some of the crowd is going to be cheering for me, so I'm really excited for that.

**Q. After that match, I remember you gave a pretty hard-core scouting report of things you wanted to do, but things he didn't allow you to do. Did you ever watch the tape of that match? Have you ever gone through it again and...**

TOMMY PAUL: No (smiling). I didn't watch that match again.

But yeah, I mean, he did what he does, and he definitely didn't let me play my game. I mean, obviously I want to go out there in my next match and try and play my game as much as possible and do what I do best.

Like I said, it's one of those matches where you're super excited to play. I love those matches, so I'm excited.

**Q. I wanted to ask about Reilly Opelka. You guys are all pretty tight together and good friends. We haven't seen him in a while. Have you been in touch, keeping him positive? What is the vibe with Reilly, if you could maybe update us from your perspective?**

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I mean, you asked if we stay in touch, we stay in touch a lot. We live 20 minutes from each other. I used to live at his house forever. But, I mean, I practice with him a ton. In December I practiced with him last year. He's had quite a few setbacks, it's been super frustrating for him.

I mean, I miss him a ton on the tour, so hopefully he can get back. Latest I've heard is he's been, you know, practicing and been able to serve without pain, which is, like, that's huge for him, so hopefully we'll see him back here soon.

**Q. Tommy, do you think you will think back to the Australian Open semifinal last year, let's say when you play Novak? Will it come into your mind at all?**

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, absolutely (smiling). That's like my only experience being on the court with him. We've practiced a few times, but you don't really get so much from practice. Usually people are working on certain things, and honestly, I can't even remember the last time we practiced together.

Yeah, I'll be thinking about that match. I'll probably go back and watch a little bit of it (smiling).

But I've seen Novak play a lot of tennis, as we all probably have. I mean, it's going to be a grind. It's going to be a very tough match. Like I said, I'm really looking forward to it.



**Q. There was a report last week that "Break Point" is probably not coming back for a third season. I thought your episode was probably one of the more successful ones, you gave a lot of yourself and introduced yourself a lot to fans. Curious what you made of your participation and how you look back on the final product?**

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I mean, it was a cool experience. I tried to give as much access as I could. I thought I saw that was kind of one of the things that it was a lack of access and performance, I guess, like a lot of people, not a lot of people watched it compared to the others.

I mean, I did my best to give a lot of access and behind-the-scenes stuff. It was a really cool experience. Leaving the house I'm renting here this morning, a guy was walking his dog. He was like, What's your name? Tommy? I saw you on Netflix.

So that's pretty cool. I think he came to my match today. I mean, it's been cool. Sucks that it's not coming back, but yeah, the whole experience was nice for me.

**Q. Did you watch the series on golf or F1?**

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I'm actually watching the latest season on the golf one right now. I mean, I thought it was really good. I mean, their travel is a little different than ours. Obviously you guys, if you watched it, you saw Foe and Fritz flying private or whatever. That's not how we normally travel (smiling).

But yeah, I mean, their life is different, and the F1 is very different. But, I mean, I think it's entertaining. I love other athletes are learning about their, I mean, their lives and seeing how it compares to ours. I mean, athletes at the top level of any sport, it's really interesting for me.

**Q. You have had this great career, great junior result, and then chapter after chapter rising in the game. Your whole life has revolved around the sport. If you had to step back and say, hey, this is the one or two lessons that I've learned from playing this sport, from being involved in this sport, what would you say?**

TOMMY PAUL: I would say No. 1 it's very important to surround yourself with good people, good people in terms of working, that motivate you, and also just, like, quality, character around you. I think that's super important. I mean, I've gotten really lucky with that.

And then also from a young age I was taught how to work hard. That's, like, the most important thing. Obviously I

didn't break onto the scene like some other people, but it's been constant progress every year I really feel.

I mean, I've enjoyed my journey at times. So, I mean, I wouldn't take anything back.

**Q. Much more mundane question. The courts this year different from last year?**

TOMMY PAUL: I mean, different balls. Different balls this year. I think we're playing with lighter balls this year than in the past years. When I first got here, I mean, you always kind of feel like the ball sails a little bit or flies when you get here, but, I mean, it's a pretty quick adjustment. I mean, you string your racquet a little tighter, accelerate a little faster.

I haven't hit on Stadium Court yet. I've heard that stadium is playing faster than the rest. I'd imagine my next match will probably be there. So yeah, I'll try and get some stadium time tomorrow.

**Q. It's been a steady progression with you. Last year was huge. A lot of big breakthroughs. What do you think it will take to get you more breakthroughs as we look ahead into the rest of the season?**

TOMMY PAUL: My goal coming into this year was to win titles. I made I think two or three finals last year. Never won the tournament. So this year was, like, my main goal is to win tournaments.

I got one title, and I want more. I mean, I want to leave the tournament with a win. I mean, that's, like, the best feeling in tennis, and it doesn't happen too often.

Yeah, I mean, that's the goal, and that's what will eventually break me into wherever I want to be.

**Q. Is there a certain growth within your tennis you're working on on the practice court? Anything you need to make that happen more often?**

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, absolutely. Playing much more aggressive tennis. We've been working on that. This week, I don't know if it's because maybe it's a little slower or less bouncy or whatever, but I've been able to attack and play very attacking tennis in my first two matches. So hopefully we can keep that going, and I think that's a very important thing for me.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports