

National Bank Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Reilly Opelka

Press Conference



D. MEDVEDEV/R. Opelka

6-4, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Can you tell us a little bit about what it was like to play in your first Masters 1000 final?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, I mean, Daniil played great, as expected. I mean, I'm not just saying that to be nice and be a good sport. He played great (smiling).

He was flawless. I had one chance to break early. I don't think that would have changed much because he was in so many of my service games.

It was a little windy and a little bit swirlier out there on the ball, so it was really tough to be powerful and be consistently powerful. But even then, even when I hit some big shots, he countered well and it was very tough to disrupt him at all.

He's very good with his opening-stance backhand, very good on the run, his passing shots are great. All expected, but he really executed well.

Q. Tough one today. We talked when you were playing Stefanos how good he was protecting his backhand and running around to get his forehand. Daniil, I feel he doesn't really need to protect his backhand because he's so good from both sides. What was the difference playing those guys back-to-back days? What was your game plan trying to come into today?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, I mean, the conditions were definitely a lot different today. It was definitely a lot windier, so it was hard to be effective on the serve, but Daniil is a much better returner than Stefanos.

It's hard to say. There are some points there even where I hit some big forehands, like four or five big forehands, and he's able to -- he's comfortable kind of on the run and just

able to neutralize points easily.

He hits the ball real flat. So I'm feeling like I'm having to lift everything and he's hitting down on everything, flat, low, and I'm having to put a lot of spin on the ball to get it up and down again.

Yeah, I'm uncomfortable in a lot of the rallies, and he seems to be -- he doesn't need to thread the needle too much too often because he moves so well.

Q. Is it impressive to see that? You talk about how it's windy out there, and he's hitting the ball so flat. Is it hard to believe he keeps getting those balls to stay in the court as he takes it with that kind of low amount of...

REILLY OPELKA: It's not coming in like unbelievable pace, you know. So what's impressive is just how he's able to get behind every ball and put it deep enough. Even when they are short, it's not easy to come in on them, because when you give him a target, he swings bigger and he'll take some more risk. And he's so fast, so if you don't hit a good volley, he's got the next one. He's really fast, he's really quick.

Yeah, I don't think there is much like -- he's hard, it's hard to disrupt him, hard to hurt him, hard to really hurt him.

Q. I was just wondering, not sure if you know, the player who won in Montreal, she's also passionate about fashion. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about both tennis and fashion. What do you take from one world and apply into the other?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, they are separate. I mean, they are just so different (smiling). It's weird. You know, it's cool to see the vintage, like all the old tennis photo shoots of like the older days with Borg and Steffi Graf and Johnny Mac. But the fashion I'm into I think is a little bit different than what we see on the tennis court.

Tennis used to have an iconic style, which is cool. It doesn't have that anymore, unfortunately. Honestly, I don't think there is many sports that do. I think tennis is one of the only ones that ever really had it in the first place with the short shorts, the high socks, the cool old-school shoes



everyone wears today as street wear. Now, you know, I'm not gonna like, I'm not wearing like my clay court Filas out to dinner (smiling).

But, yeah, there has definitely been a lot of inspo from the tennis world. The only sports like inspo carries over well is tennis and skating, skateboarding.

Q. Sorry about your loss today. You mentioned this earlier that Medvedev is a better returner than Tsitsipas. He was very good with his return against Isner last night. What do you think makes Medvedev such a good returner? Does he anticipate the server's direction, or is it something else about it that makes him such a good returner? Where would you place him among the best returners that you face?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, look, he's a great returner. Last night's match, I think the conditions, it was cold, it was slow. I haven't really talked to John, but John looked off. I mean, if John's healthy and feeling good with his body, there is no one breaking him that much.

But Medvedev is top three best returners in the world, you could say. I'd say especially for a big guy, maybe he's No. 2 behind Novak for like a server like myself, because he's long. He can afford to stand far back, because he's lanky, you know. He has like a really long reach. He's got a good wingspan.

I think he surprisingly has, I think his grips are kind of traditional so he's able to play, you know, handle the ball well from back there, from that far back, because he's pretty Eastern on his forehand.

Yeah, and he's fast. He's a good athlete. You don't have to worry about the court, you know, the court doesn't seem, when you're that far back, the court looks so big, but as fast as he is he's able to get out of the corners quick, he's able to play deep back in the corner to me. Yeah, it's tough. There's not many answers when he's on like he was today.

Q. It's been a big year for you with the progress you've made. This being your first Masters 1000 final, obviously there is an element of being on Cloud 9. How do you maintain that when you've got another two big events that are just around the corner without suffering a potential letdown after being on such a high?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, the tour is brutal. I'm flying tonight, get into Cincy tomorrow. I play Moutet, a qualifier, for example, already played a couple of matches, already had a week of practice there. I'll probably play Tuesday.

It's an unforgiving sport we're in here now. It's hard to follow up weeks. The big three have done it exceptionally well, but it's not easy to do.

I don't really have much expectations for Cincinnati, to be honest, but I definitely want to emphasize the US Open and give it my best. Everyone is good. I have lost to so many -- my matches are such a fine line, you know. I'm 6-All in the third -- upside/downside of my game is I can be 6-All in the third with Medvedev, which I've been many times, and I can be 6-All in the third with a guy outside of the top 100.

So that's the downside to me is, you know, the level, the discrepancy and level between me and those guys, it's extremely small. It's already small for anyone in general, but even for me it's always going to come down to a couple of points.

So it's just about the details, and I'm not gonna -- I'm confident, obviously have won matches, I'll have some expectation of myself, but I'm not going to be riding this win for too long, you know. Or not a win, but this week.

Q. Great week for you up here in Canada. What type of confidence does this give you going forward? Have you learned anything new about yourself? Do you have a new perspective going forward from here?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, I mean, I have learned a lot about myself. I learned that the difference between some matches is so small, you've just really got to be optimistic.

I was playing Lloyd Harris a couple days ago on the back court, and super hot, and the guy was red hot. I mean, returning unbelievable, playing well, not missing a ball. You know, I could have lost there and still had a pretty good week, two good wins, on to the next one.

But I stayed the course, stayed optimistic, and I came up with some clutch shots, and next thing you know I win that, I beat Agut, I beat Tsitsipas, ends up being a longer week. That's something to definitely remember and to know that with my style of play, Isner has done it so many times, doesn't look like he's going to win, he looks sluggish, looks tired, kind of beat, head's down, and next thing you know, he wins it 7-6 in the third and he's got some confidence, he's in the semis then.

I think this week was a great example of using that optimistic mindset as much as possible. I think it can extend some weeks, even if it's just one tournament per year, maybe two a year. I mean, look what this does for my ranking. That's all it takes, you know.

