

National Bank Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Tommy Paul

Press Conference



T. PAUL/C. Alcaraz

6-3, 4-6, 6-3

TOMMY PAUL

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You beat Carlos last year in Montreal. So do you like playing Carlos.

TOMMY PAUL: I like playing anyone that's, like, a big challenge. He's, obviously, right now, the best player in the world.

And when you have those matchups on Center Court -- you're always going to be on Center Court when you're playing No. 1 in the world, and I really enjoy playing those matches.

So yeah, I would say it's fun.

Q. I know it's been a few months since your Australian Open run to the semis. I'm just curious what that tournament did for you and your belief and your confidence that you can compete against the best players and win the big matches?

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I mean, it helps set up better draws in tournaments. It gets me more byes in 250s.

But maybe it gives you a little bit extra confidence. But tennis is such a, you know, week-to-week sport. You see people win titles and then go and lose first round the next week. It's about consistency.

And, obviously, doing well in those tournaments can bring you more confidence, but every week is a new week, you know.

Q. I think you were 21 out of 23 in terms of net points won tonight, so clearly there was really a strategy to step into the court to take the first strike and take time away from him. So what were some of the keys to

turning that match around after you had lost the second set and were trying to find your way to get that break midway through the set and then set yourself up for success?

TOMMY PAUL: It's a pretty good stat. Did not know that. And one of those points was his tweener winner, so...

I wasn't really thinking about coming in too much. I mean, I'm always trying to come into the net, trying to get up there, play aggressive tennis, but kind of just letting it happen.

After the second, I saw my first serve percentage was super low in the second set. So that was my main goal going into the third and -- I don't know. Making more returns, making him earn his service game is always -- no matter who you're playing, you want your opponents to earn their service games. So that's kind of what I was going for.

Q. Apart from the service, how have you adapt your game plan along the game?

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I think in the beginning of the match I came out playing super aggressive tennis.

And there in the second set, he was kind of the one who was playing more aggressive at the beginning of the points, and it put me on my heels.

And the game plan was, like I said, to get my first serve percentage up and, at the same time, like, go after more balls. Like, anytime I saw a ball in my strike zone, like, really get after it and try to be on offense in the points.

Q. How did you stifle his momentum when he made that tweener winner in the second set?

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I mean, the momentum could have easily switched there. I think he broke me at Love and then went up 30-Love on his serve. So six points in a row after the tweener.

And I was thinking about it, trust me. I was, like, man, like I could lose, like, 10 points in a row right now and it could be the match.



But yeah, in his service game at 30-Love, I think we played a good point or something, and I was, like, all right, like, really dig in here and try and get into this game. Whether you win it or lose it, it doesn't really matter. At the end of the day, like, you just want to set the tone for the third set.

And I think it really did that. I mean, he held there anyways and won the second. But I think digging in there kind of let him know that I was going to be there for the third.

Q. Can you talk about how good this performance was for you? How good do you feel with your game in general tonight and what this win means to you. Like, last time you beat him in Montreal was Center Court, it was daytime, and he wasn't No. 1 in the world. He wasn't the best. So what this means to you, considering the environment and considering the opponent.

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I mean, to answer your first question, I felt pretty good. I think the second and third set, the quality of the match was pretty high.

I would actually say, in my opinion, last year's match, the level overall was better. Even though, you know, he's the best player in the world right now, he's No. 1 in the world, I think the level overall was better last year.

But I think my game plan was a little bit more set this year. I had never played him, never stepped foot on court with him before that first match. So I was kind of figuring it out. He was figuring me out.

I know, like, after that match last year, he was saying that he was dealing with pressure of being at the top of the game. And, I mean, he's changed a lot. He's grown a lot, and he's definitely handling that pressure pretty well, you know, going into Wimbledon and tearing it up there.

So what was your second question?

Q. Just in general what it means to you.

TOMMY PAUL: I don't know. Like, now I'm kind of just -- I'm kind of a day-by-day kind of guy, so I'm looking towards the next match. I don't know what the score is there or who I'm going to play.

But as soon as we get out of here, I'll probably check the scores or tune into that and the week will -- (looking at TV monitor) Oh, there you go.

Yeah. I mean, so Sinner is up a set. We'll see what happens.

But, yeah, at the end of the week, I'll tell you what the week means to me. Hopefully, that will be on Sunday, but we'll see.

Q. I'm sure you're aware that it's been 20 years since Andy Roddick won the US Open. I was just wondering --

TOMMY PAUL: Not aware, but now I am.

Q. And you were only six years old, but I was wondering do you remember that match or maybe other match of Andy and how much of a model is he for you?

TOMMY PAUL: I can't say that I, like, remember the actual match. Six years old was when I started playing tennis.

I remember, you know, like, the posters from the US Open that year or even remember, like, what outfit he was wearing. Like, I wanted to wear that outfit for three years after it, you know.

But I wouldn't say, like, I really -- he was definitely one of my idols growing up, but I couldn't say I really tried to play like him or model my game after him.

I watch a lot of tennis, but I wouldn't say I model my game after too many players. I try and copy certain shots, you know.

But I watch a lot of older tennis, actually. I watch a lot of tennis from, like, the '80s and '90s. That's where I, like, go back on YouTube and watch tennis from back then.

And it's really cool how those guys would have such big holes in their game and be able to hide it, similar to Roddick. Like, he didn't have a great backhand. He would hide it with his slice. I mean, it's easy to hold serve when you have Roddick's serve.

I mean, but just watching back then, it's so different to now. Like, everyone is so solid. Not too many people have holes in their games anymore.

So I think it's much more of a mental game now than it used to be.

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