

National Bank Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Denis Shapovalov

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the press conference. Denis, can you just give us your thoughts ahead of the tournament this week.

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, definitely very excited to be back here in Toronto. Unfortunately, last time I was here I was unable to play with the knee injury, so very happy to be back playing in front of my home fans and, yeah, very excited for the week.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Any questions?

Q. When you look back at your win in Los Cabos, what would you say you're most proud of on the technical side of your game, but also your mindset throughout the tournament?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: I think I'm just happy with the way I was able to play every single match. I had a good discussion with my team after Wimbledon, trying to kind of get back on track, see kind of what went wrong after my hard court swing, you know, with Dallas and Miami, what kind of went wrong during the clay and grass season.

We started to kind of reflect on it, and kind of just said that I started to become a little bit more hesitant in my matches, not playing as freely as I normally do, not going for the shots that I normally do. Yeah, the goal in Los Cabos was to just kind of prep for these tournaments in the way of trying to play my game, and trying to play freely, and play aggressively no matter what the score is, no matter who the opponent is and, yeah, I think I was able to do that really, really well.

Also just happy that I was able to do that and play good tennis, because obviously when I do play aggressively it could obviously go both ways, but obviously it gives me the best chance of having a week like I did in Los Cabos, so definitely very happy with that.

Q. Just wanted to confirm, you're working with Mikael Tillstrom right now, and how did that partnership kind of come down, was he kind of brought to the table?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, well, I knew Mikael for many years now. He helped out a couple weeks last year when I was kind of in between coaches, in between teams. Yeah, I knew him a little bit.

I had split up with Janko after Halle, and was just kind of looking around. I had talked to Mikael, I knew he had split with Gael, and, yeah, we just thought to try for Wimbledon, and then to, yeah, to kind of see how it goes.

Yeah, I mean, so far it's been great. Obviously it helps to know the guy from beforehand. Whenever I'm in Sweden I also train at his academy, at his club, which is great. I've gotten to know him quite a bit, and I think he's a tremendous coach, so, yeah, hopefully we can have a good partnership.

Q. Obviously this tournament you're getting pulled in a million different directions, one of the things that you've been promoting recently is ShapoShelter. I know you're partnering with some local shelters. Why do you think that dogs are so important to you personally, and sort of what can you say about your work in sort of that field in the last little bit?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, it's not dogs in particular, it's just animals in general. I always grew up having animals at home, and I've always had a connection to animals. I think it's important to kind of give back to them. I think they provide so much to people, and I always felt like they bring me so much happiness and so much joy.

It's really tragic to see so many animals in shelters and not having families and homes, and knowing how much love and how much they can provide to a person and to a family.

I always, from a young age, also helped out with different shelters, different places, different animals, so it's always just been dear to my heart.

Yeah, I mean, ShapoShelter has been a great project for the last few years. It's an extra way of contributing and helping out, and just being able to kind of tell these animals' stories and try to find them more homes, I think that's the ultimate goal. So, beside everything else that I continue to help with, I feel like that's been a great addition.



Q. What are some of the things that you like to experience when playing at home? Maybe driving your favorite car, or going to, what are some places that you like to visit in town?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: That's a good question. I mean, there's obviously a lot of different restaurants and places that I like to go to, but the most important thing for me is just to kind of see my family and friends while I'm here.

Yeah, I think just to spend time with them is the most important thing for me, because obviously, first of all, kind of it helps me, helps bring me back to, not my childhood, but just takes me away from tennis a little bit, and helps me be just a normal guy again.

Also, I don't get to spend much time with them, they're all having families now, they're having kids, they can't travel so much, they have their own jobs and their own lives, so we don't have that much time to spend with each other. So I think it's very important for me to have time to kind of catch up with them and, yeah, just to spend quality time with them.

Q. Vasek will leave tennis tomorrow night or, well, this week if he...

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Hopefully not tomorrow night (laughing.)

Q. What will you remember from him, and what's his legacy to Canadian tennis and will you try to see his match if it's possible in your busy schedule?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Of course, of course. I mean, I would love to see his match. I don't know if you guys may know or not, but obviously when you play at home there's a million different things that we're required to do. So, yeah, definitely have a busy schedule, so not exactly sure how my schedule's looking up tomorrow or, sorry, when is he playing?

Q. Tomorrow night.

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Tomorrow night. But, yeah, I'll have to check, and definitely would love to try to come out and watch him.

In terms of his legacy, I mean, for me personally he's one of the first big players in Canada, and he's definitely left a big mark in Canadian tennis. I remember growing up watching him and Milos playing Davis Cup ties, playing in important matches, playing semifinals here, Rogers Cup. I mean, he's done a lot for Canadian tennis, he's done a lot

for guys like me and Felix.

When we were coming up I remember he was one of the first top players that I was able to speak to and get advice from. He was always super, super nice, and very welcoming to me. So that definitely always stayed with me, and I think we have a great relationship for that reason.

I think he's a great person, obviously with everything he's done with PTPA and to help the players really shows the type of person that he is. Yeah, I mean, you see more behind closed doors about how good of a teammate he's been over the years, and how much he's really given back to my generation and to everyone around, even with the other guys coming up as well, with Diallo and Alexis as well. So, yeah, I think all the Canadians just speak very highly of him.

It's very sad to see him go. I definitely feel like he's got, I think he's got more to give, you know, if he could get healthy and get in shape, but for sure it's amazing to look back on what he's been able to achieve. I remember following him during his Wimbledon runs, and when he won doubles at Wimbledon, and, yeah, it's just been amazing to watch him over the years.

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