

National Bank Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Gabriel Diallo

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the press conference of Gabriel Diallo. Questions, please.

Q. You had that run at the US Open last year, you came just short against Tommy Paul. How did that run to the third round there kind of build that momentum into your breakout year this season?

GABRIEL DIALLO: Yeah, I think that, well, it was my first time winning a main draw match at a major, so of course it unlocked a lot of confidence in me, belief that I belong, at the time, in the top 100, because that was the goal, and which led me to achieve that by the end of the year, with the good run that I had in Almaty. I think it was step by step, a lot of small achievements that I was able to do that made me in the position that I am today.

For sure the run in Madrid and in the Netherlands, and even in losses like that match against Taylor in Wimbledon, I think that all those gave me the belief that I belong in the top 50, and to try and dream and achieve big things.

Q. Can you just describe the difference in your feeling coming in the last couple years to this tournament when you were getting wild cards, to now coming in as a seeded player. Like, where is your confidence at, because you've risen pretty quickly.

GABRIEL DIALLO: Yeah, like you said, the last two years I was needing a wild card to get in, and now, not only am I getting in with my ranking, but I'm seeded. Obviously that's a good thing, but it comes with maybe a little bit more pressure and expectation around you. I think that the expectation that I put on myself is the one that matters the most. Maybe sometimes it's too high, sometimes it's too low. So, yeah, I think it requires a different approach to the tournament. There's a lot more of media solicitation and stuff like that. It's just going to be about being ready, and on game day just compete as hard as I can, like I try to always do, and put on a good show for the Canadian fans.

Q. You attended the University of Kentucky on a tennis scholarship. Can you talk how that experience helped shape up your game, and also the transition

from collegiate tennis to the tour.

GABRIEL DIALLO: Yeah, I think college, well from my perspective, helped me a lot to navigate with the dealing with pressure and expectation. I think before that I was a junior, so you don't have really expectation. I wasn't highly ranked or anything, so it's not like the spotlight was on me maybe like Felix or Denis, so it just allowed me to grow as a player.

But then you step into college and now all of a sudden winning matters so much. It's almost like losing is worse than winning is good. Like losses affect you a lot, not only as yourself, but as a team. You're expected to perform week-in and week-out, no matter the school you're playing.

I think that that shaped me a lot and made me the player that I am today. Every day showing up and competing, even in practice, giving everything that you've got helped me to transition into the pros. It made a self-belief and discipline in me that I try to replicate as much as I can on tour. Obviously it's not the same maybe mental approach, but, yeah, definitely made me the player that I am today, and I have no regret about attending college.

Q. It's one thing to kind of get into the top 50, it's another thing from there to make that next move. What do you think it's going to take, now that you've gotten into the first club, to make the next move up?

GABRIEL DIALLO: Yeah, I think, like you said, it requires another big jump. I think consistency is one thing. Your base level has to be much higher, because I really believe that there's so much depth on the tour. You can play a guy that's 150 or 160, and if you don't show up on that day he's going to upset you, because he's going to be looking forward to playing against you, he's going to be fired up.

So, yeah, just your base level that you bring in every day, week-in, week-out, has to be higher. You have to recognize when maybe in matches your focus or whatever is slipping a little bit away, you have to recognize it fast. Navigating momentums, I think those things are the key for me to make the next jump.

Q. How much has Martin Laurendeau these last couple years meant to you developing your game? I



know he's kind of emphasized coming to the net more and kind of being more aggressive, because you used to be more like a baseline player when you were in college.

GABRIEL DIALLO: Yeah, I mean, I was more brought up in college to kind of extend the rallies, and being tough, and not missing, and don't take too many risks. Like I said, because of the expectation and pressure, you have to win, you have to win.

I think that, yeah, he helped me a lot, first of all, just getting closer to the baseline, taking a little bit more risk, being okay with losing, but playing the right way.

Also, I have more time now. We never planned for me to play my best tennis now, we always had the vision of me playing my best tennis at 26, 27. That always gave me the freedom to express myself how I want on court, be super aggressive, come in on second serve return, and just putting a lot of pressure. I mean, of course it cost me a lot of matches in the last two and a half years, but it also made me in the ranking that I have today.

His influence has been tremendously important, not only on court but as well off court, managing the tour, managing traveling, being away from your family and stuff like that, which he experienced as a player and as a coach for the last 200 years (laughing), I don't know how old he is. No, for the last, like 30 years. I hope he's not going to listen to this (laughing). But no, I mean, his influence, I wouldn't be here without him, that's for sure and, yeah, looking forward to what we can achieve now.

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