

National Bank Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Liam Draxl

Press Conference

P. CARRENO BUSTA/L. Draxl

2-6, 6-4, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Liam, I'm sorry the match didn't go your way, but obviously you were playing in front of the home crowd, so can you tell us how that felt today.

LIAM DRAXL: Yeah, it was just an incredible feeling. Yeah, it was super special, pretty big moment for me playing the first main draw at home. Yeah, just with so many family and friends in the crowd, it's just, you know, so special for me, and definitely felt like God's timing out there.

Q. Talk about maybe the injury you suffered, you had a medical timeout, and it looked to be giving you a bit of trouble in that third set, especially in that seventh game where you had a few double-faults.

LIAM DRAXL: Yeah, I mean, at the end of the day, there's nothing too wrong with the shoulder. It's just the muscle tightness, hurting a little when you're serving. But you need to be tougher than that and not double fault three times in one game and stuff like that. I was talking with the physio on the court and they said it was nothing serious and it was just muscle tightness.

Q. You were playing such incredible tennis that opening set, what do you think maybe shifted the momentum a little bit in terms of the result?

LIAM DRAXL: For sure. I mean, obviously I came out playing really well. You can always look at it like on both sides of the court. You know, he missed a few balls in his opening service game. And then I was just serving great. Then I got the bonus break at 5-2 and everything.

I think he just slowly played better throughout the match, and it kind of just, yeah, good experience. You know, he's obviously a tremendous player, been on the tour a long time, and I haven't been on the tour at all.

So I think it was a little experience-based for me, for sure.



Got a little tight after winning the first set, and, yeah, just wanted to get over the finish line so badly. Yeah, I think my level dropped a little bit, especially on the serve, but hopefully I'll just keep putting myself in the position.

Q. Talking about your serve there, what specifically do you think was working so well for you in that first, and on your level specifically, did anything change in that second and third?

LIAM DRAXL: Yeah, I mean, yeah, I was serving, yeah, really good. No complaints (laughing). I was hitting all of them good, first, second good.

Yeah, then in the second and third I, yeah, I just think overall the level slightly dropped. Especially I would say more so in the second set, I think. I was just scraping by in my service games, started missing some balls. I kept holding, but, yeah.

Then it's just those big games, big points that he played better than me. Just as I said, like in the third I got that break back, was so pumped up, crowd was getting pretty rowdy. Then you double fault three times in the next game. You just can't do that.

Q. Seems like as the game progressed Pablo played with more confidence, aggressiveness, taking more initiative in the rallies. How did you adjust your, how did you try to adjust your serve to that, to either like keep getting him in trouble, even in the third set when he had the momentum?

LIAM DRAXL: Yeah, it's just tough, yeah, for sure. Also, yeah, maybe I'm not necessarily hitting the ball as well off the ground because he's hitting better too, you know. You know, he's not missing, and he's hitting with good depth and everything, I definitely felt that out there. It was tough to counter that and I just couldn't do it today.

Yeah, hopefully, I'll be in the position to keep playing on the ATP Tour and playing guys like this, so hopefully I can adjust my level to these guys.

Q. You mentioned this is your first ATP main draw, and clearly this is an event that means so much to Canadians, and I think this is probably the event that



you came to as a kid as well watching these top players. What are some of your earliest memories of coming to this event, and what does it mean to you to be able to have this debut, even though it didn't go the way you wanted it to, in front of your home crowd?

LIAM DRAXL: Yeah. Early memories? Yeah, I mean, I was just on the grounds with my friends, playing mini tennis, the games they got out there. Fastest serve, I remember that one, that was fun. Yeah, I just remember just spending all day here with my friends, and we're digging and fighting to get every towel, wristband you could possibly try to get. That was so fun.

Yeah, I mean, for sure, I was just dreaming, as a kid, it sounds kind of cliché, I feel like a lot of players say it, but this was a dream for me, you know, going to see all the big players here. And I loved tennis so much when I was young. Yeah, it was like, wow, this would be amazing if I could play.

I feel like, yeah, I just have such a level of gratitude and just content, a level of content. I'm just so grateful to be out there. I'm just a kid from Newmarket. Yeah, I've been blessed with such a good community where I grew up at the tennis club in Newmarket, where my dad has been the coach for decades.

It's just so special because, I don't know what the number is, but I'm playing out there and people are cheering me on. And it's a weird feeling, like they're screaming and I know who that is, like I know their voice. It was just super special because I feel like I literally know like 75 percent of the people in the crowd that are all from Newmarket, you know? It's amazing.

And seeing some of my best friends, Adam and Jack, if they ever see this, when I was breaking back in the third, I was just completely firing it up at them. And like they're my best friends since so young. I was going to kindergarten with my friend Jack. Just seeing him, we don't get to see each other a lot, and just seeing him in the crowd, firing it up with him, it was like, you know, just doesn't get any better.

Q. How do you think your Challenger success helped you prepare for this?

LIAM DRAXL: I don't know if it, I mean, it's just so different. It's a level jump, you know, Challengers and ATP. At the end of the day, like, yeah, I feel like, yeah, for sure it helps. Obviously I won a lot of matches and everything, and the ranking has gone in a great trajectory for me this year.

But for me at least, personally it feels completely different to play on the ATP Tour, playing guys like Carreno Busta, he won this tournament three years ago, it's a completely different level. I mean, it's a pretty different level playing Pablo than, you know, on the Challenger tour.

Also I feel like it's maybe just a little mental as well. When you've had success at the Challenger tour, like I have, obviously won a bunch of matches and stuff, maybe it feels more normal just to close out matches and stuff. Win the first, and you're playing well and you just kind of ride the wave and just win in straight sets, you know.

So, yeah, I think I have a ways to go on the ATP Tour, but I'm looking forward to that process of hopefully adjusting to the level and the experience and the atmospheres like this.

Q. Can you walk me through the first few games of the opening set and just describe your energy level and how it compared to other matches and tournaments you played in the past?

LIAM DRAXL: Yeah, I mean, I think I started unreal (smiling). Obviously I served good in the first game. And then on his first service game I just toasted a forehand winner. That was a good feeling. I was like, Okay, I'm feeling good, for sure (laughing). So I started out great.

Yeah, it's a bummer that, it's just a bummer that I couldn't keep up the level. But everyone's so good at tennis. I usually play on the Challenger Tour, usually playing guys inside 300, everyone's such a good player. So that's why you have to take these risks on the pro tour. You have to go for big serves and big shots, because everyone's so good. I mean, Pablo's not going to miss a ball, you got to take it to him and beat him. All these guys. It's just a requirement. You have to go for big shots.

Q. I know you've only been off court for about an hour here, but any learning or takeaways that you can gain from an experience like tonight?

LIAM DRAXL: I think it's just simply experience for me. I mean, I think it's just being there, and then hopefully down the road on the ATP Tour winning some matches, getting over the finish line a couple, you know, multiple times, and then hopefully I'll get some experience myself and go from there.

What I'll take away is just playing in an amazing atmosphere on a big court. And especially playing at home, the emotions and the pressure are higher than any other tournament for me. So I'll definitely take just that whole experience and just kind of soak it in, and hopefully use it for future big matches.

Q. Pablo's obviously won this title before, he's made it to US Open semifinals twice. Mentally for yourself knowing that you can go toe to toe with a guy as accomplished as that, how can you bring that going forward the rest of the season in the future?

LIAM DRAXL: For sure. Yeah, I mean, it's great. I mean, he's been a little injured and he hasn't played in a while, and he's not at his career high any more. I think you got to be a little realistic, you got to stay real with it. But he's a top-100 player still, and obviously he's played great on hard court as well.

So it's definitely, yeah, encouraging and inspiring. And, yeah, I played some tour veterans and I've had my chances and everything. So I think my level's there, I think it's mostly experience.

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