

# US OPEN

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New York, New York, USA

## Frances Tiafoe

### Press Conference



**THE MODERATOR:** Welcome 2023 US Open. Frances, welcome. If you could, your thoughts on this year's US Open.

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, just super excited, super excited to be out here competing once again. Obviously had a huge breakout here last year. It's been a great season. Been waiting for a good run at a slam, so why not here in 2023?

But, yeah, I'm super excited to start on Monday.

**THE MODERATOR:** Questions.

**Q. How did the Cadillac event go last night, as well as facing off against Learner Tien, how he has done so well in the juniors?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, Cadillac event was sweet. Escalade out at the crib is even better (smiling).

Yeah, I mean, I'm really loving the partnership. It's been great so far.

I really don't know Learner at all. He won Kalamazoo twice, so he plays at a good level. He played Kecmanovic last year. I remember asking him about it.

It was fun. Fun to play a young guy. Hopefully he'll be a name you guys hear for a while. It should be fun. Nothing but exciting to play the guy, get back out here, start the US Open.

**Q. Obviously a big step for you this year, getting inside the top 10. Talk a little bit about how different it feels coming into this US Open this year, if at all, for you.**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, definitely. Definitely. Everyone's pretty excited to come out watch me play. Everyone wants to see me do well. Obviously there's a level of expectation.

But ultimately I'm just ready to have a good run and play

tennis at a high level. This is one of the places where I can actually enjoy playing generally. It's just fun. It's super fun out here. Atmosphere is crazy.

It will bring a good spark in me, that's for sure.

**Q. Is the self-belief any different for you compared to past years?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, it's high. It's definitely high (smiling).

**Q. Trying to make the transition, you talked about the pro habits being the separator between pros and juniors. Why do you think the discipline clicked when it did for you? It was a few years into your career.**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** I think sometimes, I mean, humbly speaking, when you're so talented or the game comes easy to you, I think you disrespect the blessing a little bit. You just assume things are going to keep happening for you at a high rate.

So when it doesn't happen, you're not used to doing what you're usually used doing, winning, playing till the end of the weeks, da, da, da, adversity hits. You're essentially handling it for the first time. So there's growing pains in a way. You kind of learn how to deal with that, deal with adversity, deal with taking Ls, egos get hurt, whatever. You got to reinvent yourself, all that.

So that's what I think happened with me. I hope it doesn't happen with her, I hope she can go and continue to kill, continue to play at a high level. Huge fan of hers. Also from D.C. area. Hopefully she can just keep going.

That's what happened with me. I'm happy it happened, so... Put me in a good position now.

**Q. It's 20 years since Andy Roddick won the singles here.**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** I knew that. I don't want to curse here. I knew that's what you were going to say (laughter).

**Q. What is the legacy of Andy Roddick's achievement from back then and your thoughts about how American men can advance it now?**



**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, I think obviously the big three had a big thing to say about that for 20 years. Obviously we still got one of 'em that seems like, he's 36, seems like he's 16, how he's moving around and stuff.

I think American tennis is in a great place. Tommy Paul is playing great tennis. Fritz, myself. You have Chris, Ben, Korda. I think American tennis is in a great place. I think it's a matter of time, whether it happens here, whether it happens in due time.

Obviously what Andy did in '03 was incredible. I think we hear it more than he probably hears it, what he did in '03.

Yeah, I hope one of us are able to do it. I hope when we do do it, it's here at the Open. It will be cool. It will be cool.

**Q. What is it about the US Open or this venue, about the atmosphere, that you do enjoy? In the realm of guys that are coming up in U.S. tennis, how do you view your place in that and the way a lot of young men of color look up to you, inspired to try to play because of you?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, I mean, first, American tennis is in a great spot. It's been probably the best spot it has been in a really long time.

As far as people of color, geez, that's a great compliment. I appreciate that. But, yeah, it holds a lot of weight. I definitely feels it holds a lot of weight. A lot of kids want to play the game now because of me. I feel that. Definitely a big responsibility. It's definitely a place you want to be in, a place you want to continue to grow and have people want to play the game.

Obviously I think the biggest thing is what happened the last 12 months, adversity in sport, what that means. Saw all the people, how the country is reacting to me going for that run. I think it helps because it's not a normal face you see doing that every day here at the US Open.

You asked about why the US Open is the best slam. I mean, 'cause you can't beat the rowdy fans here. Everyone past 3 p.m. is drunk as hell, just having an unbelievable time. The ref has no shot at controlling that atmosphere. Just let it go and let it do what it does.

Yeah, it's arguably one of the best sporting events in the world.

**Q. It seems that many slams have some kind of senior winners, obviously the French with Rafael Nadal. It's not the same here at the US Open. Do you have an**

**idea why?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, it's later in the season. Obviously maybe guys aren't as sharp. You never know what the case may be. Fans and whatever.

Yeah, it hasn't been so straightforward here at the Open. That's why I feel good. It's kind of like anybody can get it done, so...

We'll see. It's always kind of been one where who's going to kind of win. I think every year you go to the French Open, you're like, Yeah, I've seen this movie before, so...

It's a little different here.

**Q. You mentioned your belief in yourself being higher this year. Is any of that leading you to do anything differently coming into this slam in terms of how you prepare, what you tell yourself going? Also, when you talk about the impact you had on so many young kids of color, young girls and boys, what kind of messages do you hear from them?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, I mean, when I say my expectations are much higher, not really. I'm not going to do anything different. I'm a very relaxed guy. I'm just going to go chill at the hotel, kind of hang out, be super low-key. Hear my mom tell me how much she loves me before every match. Kind of the same thing. Nothing too crazy (smiling). Honestly, relax.

Yeah, as far as these kids, man, these messages, it's crazy. I go around at some tournaments, even back home practicing, these little kids come up crying, We've been waiting to meet you. I want to be just like you. You're the reason I started the game, da, da, da.

That is stuff that means a lot. I put in a lot of time, hard work. Some people think I'm out here joking around, whatever. But kids see life in me. They see the game is cool to play because of me. It's a cool place to be in. It's cool to feel like you're inspiring people.

I measure success how many people you bless. So I feel like I'm doing a good thing.

**Q. You mentioned the big three dominating. You were competing at the back end of a Grand Slam, arguably a lot of the field realistically don't have a chance of winning a Grand Slam. They're playing it to do the best they can. There's this split between them and the big guys at the top end. Do you ever discuss that with other players about how difficult it is to know that maybe, unless everything went amazingly well, you**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**can win it? For a lot of guys, they can't do that.**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** It's funny, I actually had this conversation with Gael a couple weeks ago. He was like, Man, Frances, man, if I was your age, my career would have been so different, da, da, da. I would go quarterfinals of slams.

I was like, Man, I have to play Rafa at the French, I guess I'm done. I have to play Federer at Wimbledon, I guess I'm done.

He was like, Y'all's era is way better, da, da, da.

Yeah, I mean, my first quarterfinal in Australia, I played Rafa. I was like, This is a tall order.

But now, I mean, it's definitely much more open. A lot of these guys, I mean, playing in top 10 or whatever, that are ahead of me, other than Nole, we're all the same age. I grew up with a lot of these guys. I've played them since I was 12 years old. A little different circumstance. Game is changing. Changing of the guard, for sure.

Now we have a new one, Alcaraz is definitely the guy to beat if you want to do anything special in this game.

Yeah, I think it's going to come in waves. I think we're probably going to have a couple more guys who are going to be pretty dominant. I think Medvedev is still very dominant, one of the biggest hard court players in the world. Obviously Nole. Zverev is playing much better again. He's going to be a tough ask.

Game is in a little different place. A little different dynamic. I'm happy to be in this era, for sure.

**Q. You mentioned the 36-year-old moving like he's still 16. Are you ever caught off guard, like this can't still continue with this guy, that he has to slow down at some point?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** No. I mean, we can keep waiting or just do the other things to try to beat him, right? He's hungrier than ever. He wants to pass his peers by a long shot. He wants there to be no conversation that he's not the best player in the world, right, of all time.

He's hungrier than ever. You got to beat him.

**Q. He couldn't play here last year. Probably a little bit more driven.**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** A couple years, right? Yeah, so he's ready. He's coming with that, for sure. It's going to be

interesting to see how he plays.

**Q. I imagine this is probably a busier lead-up to a slam for you than in the past. What have you made of all the obligations? Anything particularly cool you've gotten to do?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, a little bit. Just all the brand partners, just doing some stuff. Hosted an event yesterday, Cadillac event. That was pretty cool. Did another appearance. Like my agent tells me what I'm doing all the time. I don't really answer his messages, so I don't really know what I'm doing. Yeah, I just kind of show up.

It's definitely different. It's definitely different. It's part of it. It's a great learning experience for me. Time management is definitely big. All the people usually I'm hanging out and going to dinner with my friends here in New York City, kind of cutting that out. At the end of the day I'm quite tired. Bro, I'll catch you at the end of the week.

**Q. You spoke after Wimbledon about saying you were shocked at your performance; you never felt like that before. Have you been able to identify what caused that form and what lessons you learned?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, I mean, I think sometimes you have such high expectations, you put so much pressure on yourself, you want to do well. You don't perform. Whoa, what was that?

I think sometimes people make the moment bigger than what it needs to be. At the end of the day it's a tennis match. We played many of them. Just go out and do what you do, enjoy the game. You're going to hopefully get that shot many more times to be in that position.

No need to be like, This is the time right now or the world is going to end. I think that's kind of what happened there. Totally different approach. I'm just going to be me, have fun. Whatever the result is, it is. I can live with it at the end of the day, no matter what.

**Q. Are you going to break out any NBA jerseys this year? Would you like to see tennis fans be able to move around and be loud during points like they can at basketball games?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, for sure. I'm definitely going to bring out some jerseys. Shawne Williams (indiscernible). Me wearing jerseys, nothing to worry about, I'm always wearing jerseys, that's never a problem.

Yeah, for sure. Especially here. I think it would be

unbelievable. Obviously like to see the game go that way. The question is to get younger fans to watch the game, want to attend the game. Kids these days have zero attention spans, so I think we definitely need, like, to hype up the atmosphere a little more so they're more engaged.

They'll get on the TikTok real quick if they get bored.

**THE MODERATOR:** Thank you.

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Thanks.

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