

US OPEN

Monday, August 28, 2023

New York, New York, USA

Tommy Paul

Press Conference

T. PAUL/S. Travaglia

6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Tommy, congratulations. Four-set win. Your thoughts on your performance.

TOMMY PAUL: I think I came out, started the match really well. Served well and returned well throughout the whole match.

Had a little hiccup there in the fourth set, then got it together -- in the third set, then got it together in the fourth.

Was happy overall with the result. Going to hit the practice courts and do some fine-tuning tomorrow and be ready for the next round.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Last year at this time you said getting the first wins at the Open, you had so much anxiety coming here. Things changed in 12 months. How has your mentality changed? Is it more relaxed coming in this year? More pressure because you're ranked higher?

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I mean, like you said, the previous years coming to the US Open, I felt overwhelmed. Then after I got my first-round win last year, it felt like I had so much weight lifted off my shoulders. I felt, like, free walking through the grounds here.

I feel the same way this year. I feel just happy to be here. The support this year is on another level like I've never seen it before. So it's a lot of fun to just go walk around and practice. Obviously today's match was fun.

I never had, like, a group following me all the way back from the court to Ashe. They were cheering for me the whole way, just clapping. That was a first for me.

It's exciting to see how excited all the fans are for American tennis.



Q. As you talked about with the Court 17 crowd being great for you, the difference in the fourth set to get back to your top form, what gave you the mentality to be able to push back as well as the things you want to work on on the practice court?

TOMMY PAUL: I think I really, really wanted to finish it in three sets. Going deep in tournaments, it helps a lot to close out matches as quick as you can.

Like I said, I had a little hiccup there, then had a break down. I got broken first game of the fourth. I mean, I just kind of took my time in the back of the court and really thought about how I need to lock in here. It's not good for me to go five sets here.

I always felt pretty confident in the match. I never really felt like I was going to lose the match. I was very happy that I got it done in four, and really wanted to get it done in four after I lost that third.

Q. You talked about going out to the Hamptons, having the fishing excursion. Is that the biggest fishing experience you've had?

TOMMY PAUL: No, it was amazing. I grew up fishing a little bit in North Carolina. I never really caught anything like that. I think my max when I was younger was like 50 pounds or something. The fish I posted with was 190. We also caught one that was like 350, but we weren't allowed to keep it. Yeah, I mean, I think a lot of people think I'm capping when I say that, but we actually had one that was 350. It took, like, an hour fighting it, maybe more.

It was super nice. It was really cool to get out there. Had a good training week, did some fun things. Like I said, New York can be pretty hectic for me. I like a little bit calmer environments, so it was really a good training week for me.

Q. Doing something on late bloomers. I don't think it took you that long to hit your high ranking, but maybe more like Chris Eubanks, others. For you, it took a while since you made your slam debut, five years before you broke top 100. Talk about what it was like for you during those periods maybe where you were a little frustrated? Where did you find belief? What kept you pushing forward thinking your time would actually come?



TOMMY PAUL: That's a good question.

I think I could dive into that and talk for like an hour on that one. But I think to give you a short answer, they were very frustrating times. But I don't think I ever really, like, stopped believing. I, like, kind of knew that I could make it. I just didn't really know how to do it yet.

I surrounded myself with a really good team. I think that was, like, the key for me, putting the right people around me, the right pieces to the puzzle. Obviously it's a lot better now than it was.

I'm pretty happy where I'm at now. Obviously want to keep moving up in the rankings. But definitely I would say maybe not as much as some other people, but late-bloomer, for sure.

Q. You mentioned the excitement of people trailing you. I imagine on the court you're referring to the support you got. What do you do to channel your mind, whatever you do to keep the focus, keep calm?

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I mean, that goes back to, like, routines really. Through the match, you got to have good routines. No matter if there's people in the stands or nobody there, like you got to be able to do your same routines.

I think people at the top level of the game do it so well. I mean, we all obviously watch them a ton. I think if you really watch them closely, their routines, you would be, like, super impressed with the way they go about their matches.

So I think that's something I've really been working on. Obviously when you have a bunch of people there cheering for you, it's a lot more fun than, like, playing in 2020, you know?

Q. Can you explain any of your routines or things you do? We notice the racquet twirls.

TOMMY PAUL: It's kind of funny, that is one of my routines. It's funny. I feel like I'm only doing it when I'm playing my best tennis, I'm spinning my racquet the most.

Just taking your time going to your towel, taking deep breaths, having positive thoughts.

Q. Was there a time when you and Taylor were having so much success at the end of your junior careers, were the expectations at one point that it's going to happen overnight, this is going to be an easy transition?

TOMMY PAUL: I think it was a pretty easy transition for Fritz (smiling). But for me, like, I think I probably had a little bit of that mindset at 18, 19, 20. Then, like, you kind of realize what it actually takes.

'Cause in the juniors, your tournaments don't really start, like, when you're at the top of the game in juniors, your tournaments don't really start till the quarterfinals. You know who you're playing, you feel pretty confident you're going to win. You're like, Who is my quarterfinal match? That's kind of the mindset we all had in juniors.

It's very different in the pros how deep it actually is. The players all the way up to 300 are good, good players. Everyone strikes the ball so well.

It's super small things that make the difference.

Q. Going back to the match a bit, you started off so confident and dominating. Tell us a little more what was going through your head at the end of the second set and the third set.

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I started the match really well. I was actually really nervous going into the match.

Q. You didn't look like it.

TOMMY PAUL: I tried to make it that way.

I served really well. That helps a ton. When you're returning well and serving well, it takes a little pressure off.

What were you saying about the second set?

Q. In the momentum shift, what was going through your head? You kind of came out of nowhere and took the third set. How did you put it back together?

TOMMY PAUL: When you're playing a really good level in the first set of a match, you always got to expect the guy to step up his level in the beginning of the second. There were some times in the second where he really did. Once you get to the third, you're kind of like, All right, this is his last chance to step it up and he's going to.

You have to be ready for those little changes in the match. Today I felt like I was ready for it, but then it kind of slipped away there in the third.

In the fourth, I really had to turn it on.

Q. What did the Alcaraz matches you played this summer do for your confidence? Did it give you the

kind of belief that, I can go far at the Open?

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, absolutely. I think beating, like, the people at the top of the game would give anyone confidence really.

I think it's not like now I feel like I'm going to beat everybody or something. Everyone's good. You have to really compete against every person that you're playing.

I mean, a lot more people ask me about it. That's pretty much the only difference (smiling).

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