

US OPEN

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Stefanos Tsitsipas

Press Conference

S. TSITSIPAS/M. Raonic

6-2, 6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Stefanos, straight-sets victory. Assess your performance round one.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: My performance was solid. A good first-round match that I got to play very focused. Well, yeah, the biggest obstacle and challenge today was the serve. I knew that I was dealing with a good server. I've spoken how his serve is really good if he's switched on.

I found ways to return as many balls as I could today, get started with rallies. I was really feeling my backhand change of direction really well. I was just able to navigate the ball from left to right with ease, which helped a lot.

It was not easy because I feel like he didn't have much to lose. He's kind of just getting started after being absent for a long time. He was playing free. He was hitting the ball.

With big hitters like him that don't give much rhythm, it can always be very challenging getting what you want on court, kind of imposing your game.

It kind of felt a little bit messy in the beginning of the match. I was trying to get as much into the rhythm as I could. At times it felt like just unexpected, abrupt in ways that he would hit the ball, the ways he would just use my pace against his pace.

But eventually it turned out well, yeah. I did feel good on the court. The nerves kind of mellowed and made me even calmer throughout the entire match. I really felt confident on the third set to kind of end it. Strategically I did the right things towards the end.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You mentioned your moving your backhand around. When you were growing up, did you ever hit with a two-handed backhand?



STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I switched and I committed to a single-handed backhand at the age of eight. I remember the phase that I was in between deciding which one am I going to follow. I remember showing up at practice on Monday, playing the entire practice with a double-handed backhand. Then next day on Tuesday, I just decided, You know what, I want to play single-handed backhand. That kept going for weeks and weeks.

I remember my second coach at the time, I remember that moment very well, he kind of made fun of me. He said, Stef, are you ever going to decide what you follow? Kind of joked that day. I took it seriously, so I said, Single-handed backhand it is. I'm just committing to that. I'm going all the way, not looking back.

It stuck since then. It's my signature shot today. It kind of defines me.

Q. Do you ever have any regrets about it, given the way the game has gone?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Well, the game has definitely shifted more towards double-handed backhands. Safer shot, some may say; easier to control others may say.

But I still have faith and belief in the single-handed backhand. I'm here to kind of not have it die. I won't say successor, but the reason I do play a single-handed backhand is because of Roger. I kind of in a way want to be his successor, as big as this may sound. I'm not even near that yet, but he definitely gave me a reason to pursue a single-handed backhand. That's definitely a reason why.

Also Pete Sampras was my hero growing up. So these two tennis players make this shot for me extra special. It kind of sits in my heart deeply because I really want to be like them. I don't want to copy them, but I just want to acknowledge their greatness through that shot.

Q. Stef, you played your next opponent once on grass. How much do you remember from that match, if you remember?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I do remember, yes. Newcomer at the time. Well, much more experienced now than he was then.



He can serve well. He has a very loose game. He plays very loose, similar to Ben Shelton that I got to play in Cincinnati.

So I'm facing a left-hander, which gives different rotations and different feelings when you have to face players like this as opposed to players that are right-handed.

I hope I get enough practice to go out there on Wednesday and do my thing the way I want to.

Q. Have you seen him at all since that match?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Yes, I have seen him from time to time. He's a talented kid. He has talent. He can feel the ball. He can do a lot of things with the ball. That is definitely something that I have in mind, having to face him.

Q. Seems like you got healthy from where you were in March, April, yet you've pretty much played consistently. How is it you're able to get your body in good shape without taking much time off?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Well, when you do this for years and years, your body gets acclimatized and adjusted to this procedure, let's call it.

I've wondered the same. I mean, knock on wood, haven't been badly injured. I did have an injury after the Australian Open which hurt me a lot. I had in Indian Wells and Miami tournament, these two tournaments that I did really want to approach a different way, but I wasn't able to.

Yeah, regardless of that, that happened. But I bounced back. I came back healthier after a few months. I think it took two months to get back on track the way I wanted to be. The clay court swing was okay.

How do I do it? With lots of fitness, with lots of maintenance. 'Maintenance' I mean taking care of my body with recovery and the right supplementation to make sure the engine is running properly. These are all types of clichés. Every player has to do these things in order to prevent injuries but also stay healthy during their career.

I make sure I do the best possible to ensure my well-being and health when I perform at such high levels against players that demand the best out of you.

I have a feeling that I do play a lot, but I do enjoy it at the same time. It makes me feel good being out on the court competing.

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