

US OPEN

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Tommy Paul

Press Conference

T. PAUL/R. Safiullin

3-6, 2-6, 6-2, 6-4, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Five sets after losing the first two. Three hours and 12 minutes. Just give us your thought process after the second set.

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, after the second it wasn't super pretty on my end. He was definitely playing more aggressive tennis than I was, making me feel super uncomfortable. I knew I had to change that. I had to, like, try to get to the net more, try to bring him to the net. That was kind of my goal for the rest of the match. Along with extending the rallies.

I felt like when I did extend the rallies, I won a lot more points. I just wanted to change something. I knew something had to change, so I was thinking about that when I changed my clothes. I came back out and I was like, Hopefully I can change more than just my clothes, I can change this match, you know (smiling)?

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Was that as much fun, the last few sets, as it looked? What did it feel like once the momentum of the third set and fourth started rolling with all the noise?

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, it was so much fun. I didn't really give them too much to cheer for the first two sets. I know I could, like, feel it. Everyone was getting a little frustrated. I was getting frustrated. I wanted to give people, like, something to cheer about.

After the second, like, I knew I wasn't at that point going -- it wasn't a highlight reel kind of day. I was like, I'll give them something to cheer about with just extending points and heart for the rest of the match.

I think that's really what got me through, along with everyone there was really cheering for me, like you said. It was so much fun playing on that court, especially there in



the end of the fourth and then through the whole fifth set. It was definitely a really cool atmosphere.

Q. The little boy you gave a shirt to at the end. Wondering what you said to him. You were so close to him getting the towel, how was that?

TOMMY PAUL: Definitely sat down strategically. He wanted to be in my ear the whole match. It was actually really fun every time I went over there. He was encouraging me, I mean, damn near coaching me (smiling). I had to go over there and give him some love.

I told him, like, Dude, you have to come to the next one. Get in contact with me, message me on Instagram or whatever and we'll get it hooked up. Yeah, it was fun. I had to go over there and dap him up.

Q. When you're down two sets to nothing, actually working the comeback, you tie it 4-4, did your mind go back to Wimbledon, the Lehecka match?

TOMMY PAUL: It's funny you say that. It did. After I brought it back to 4-All, I was like, We can't have another Wimbledon. Let's make sure to hop on this fifth set quick, play some good tennis to start the fifth.

I think it was good that it came up. I mean, you can bring it up in your head and it can be negative and you can look at that match and not learn from it. I felt like I did a good job learning from it today.

Q. What did you do differently today that you didn't do then? Crazy match with the rain delay...

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I think, I mean, I just broke and I didn't get broken. It was probably the biggest difference.

Like I said, I kind of just said I need to come out hot in the fifth set. Really used the momentum. It also helped, like you guys have said, the whole crowd was on my side. I think he was getting more frustrated than Lehecka was getting in Wimbledon.

Q. Those are the kind of matches that over the years have set this tournament apart from the other slams. Are those the type of things you dreamed of as a young player?



TOMMY PAUL: Absolutely. I remember a match on that court with Donald Young. I think he was down two sets to love on that court. Came back and won in five. I think I was, like, pretty young at the time. I was like, That would be so cool to do that one day.

I mean, I think the atmosphere out there today was probably even better than the atmosphere when he played. It was definitely really cool. A really cool experience.

Obviously I'd like to win a little quicker, but... Overall, like for a five-set match, I don't know, three hours and something, it wasn't that long.

THE MODERATOR: Three hours 12.

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, good for my legs, good for me if I want to go deeper in the tournament.

Q. You said it didn't feel that long, but you still had to come back from two sets to none down. That shows your fitness. Talk about that as well as Brad Stine now having a new co-coach with that wonderful kid.

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I mean, we definitely get after it in the gym. I don't think I won this match because of fitness really. I mean, obviously everyone's pretty fit on tour. I don't think, like, my opponent wore out or anything.

But two-way matches like this, you do have to have good fitness. Yeah, I mean, we crush it in the gym. I never want to lose a match due to fitness.

Today was a prime example of if I didn't do all those days in the gym, like, I wouldn't have been able to win that match or come back from two sets to love.

Five sets are a different beast than two-out-of-three. That's why we have days in between. We need the rest. I just got straight out of the ice bath, will probably do another one tomorrow.

But yeah, I mean, what were you saying about Brad and the other coach?

Q. No, the co-coach being the great little boy you gave the shirt to.

TOMMY PAUL: He was great the whole time. Like, even when I lost the second set, he was there and trying to motivate me more than Brad was (smiling). It was awesome.

He was like, We're here all night. We're here all night. He

kept saying, We're here for five sets.

It was cool. He wanted to win the match as bad as I did.

Q. You said that you wanted to change something. Wondering how you've improved as a problem solver to figure out what you need to do to win the match. What's it like to have a complete game and different things to draw upon, because not everyone has that?

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, for me it was trying to use the rest of my so-called all-court game. I try and have an all-court game. But the first two sets he was dominating me from the baseline. We were playing quick points. We were playing the kind of tennis that he wanted to play.

My whole goal was to try and switch that up, try and get to the net, bring him to the net, slice a little more. It's not always easy. He returns really well. If I don't make my first serve, he attacks my second. The point is on his strings.

There's little adjustments that need to be made. But ultimately I think I did a really good job of it today. Wish I did it earlier in the match, but...

Yeah, I mean, I'm happy to get through it in any way.

Q. So much of this sport is mental. You had never come back from two sets down in a slam before. When did you really start to believe this could happen? Did you always have that belief?

TOMMY PAUL: I mean, probably before I even lost the second set, to be honest. I got down a break in the second. I got down two breaks. I still want to win the match. I'm like, You got to win this in five if you're going to win.

There was no doubt in my mind that I could come back and win in five. Like you said, I'd never done it before. No better place to do it the first time than New York City.

Q. You get Davidovich Fokina next. Your thoughts of seeing him again? Five sets in Melbourne. That will be another test.

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, absolutely.

We had probably one of the best matches for me that I was involved in this year in Australia. We played five sets. It was a really roller coaster match. The level was off the charts, I thought.

He's obviously been playing really, really great. It's going to be a major challenge. Like, he's another guy who I don't

think he's ever lost a match due to fitness.

Hopefully we have a full-on war, and the better man wins.

Q. He was really creeping in, being very aggressive, on your second serve.

TOMMY PAUL: Today?

Q. Yes.

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah.

Q. Does that have any effect on you? You must see that.

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah.

Q. How do you experience that as a server when a guy is standing a foot inside the baseline?

TOMMY PAUL: I mean, I thought it was kind of weird. I tried to body him up sometimes. He actually returned pretty well from that spot. I was pretty impressed with it.

I mean, I like returning early. He took that away from me. He was bodying me up really well. Normally when people body me up, I can kind of get out of the way. But he was hitting big serves.

Q. You were way back on his second serve, right?

TOMMY PAUL: At the end of the match, or the last three sets. In the first set and a half, I was trying to take it early. He kind of took it away from me. I tried to take it away from him. He was returning really well from there.

I mean, I was overall impressed. I think it was interesting play.

Q. The serve-and-volley tactic, you integrated that well from the third set on. Was there an intention trying to throw it in a couple times each game? What was your thought process about the serve and volley?

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, definitely I was trying to get to the net in any way I could. Serve and volley is probably the easiest way to get to the net. You don't always know 'cause, like, he returns hard and well. It's not easy to serve and volley and get to the net against guys like that.

Like I said, after the first set I really wanted to find the net. Serve and volley is the best way to do it. Before the match, we talked about trying to get in some. I wasn't comfortable in the first two sets anywhere really in the

court. I kind of just forced myself to do it after the second.

It wasn't like a certain amount of times per game or anything. I was like, Let's just go after it and see what happens.

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