

US OPEN

Saturday, September 2, 2023

New York, New York, USA

Peyton Stearns

Press Conference



P. STEARNS/K. Boulter

6-4, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Straight sets, this is not college anymore, what do you make of all this now?

PEYTON STEARNS: I don't think I've wrapped my mind around the fact where I am right now because I'm honestly trying not to think about it too much. I think that's been the biggest key to the success this week, is not letting all of this get to my head.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You've lost 17 games in three matches. Tonight, did you feel like this was your best match of the week?

PEYTON STEARNS: In a sense, yes and no. I think I went out there very tight, very nervous, playing under the lights, haven't done that in a while.

But I think she was also the same way. I was able to come out on top of that and she wasn't, I took control from there.

But in a sense of getting over that hump of getting out of that funk a little sooner, I think I did a great job compared to what I have been doing, so I would say yeah.

Q. Fourth round, what does it mean to you, American kid, Cincinnati? What does it mean to be in the fourth round of a slam?

PEYTON STEARNS: I've got to represent. We're on home soil here, so...

Q. The last game was a roller coaster. Take me through the last game, what you did to steady yourself.

PEYTON STEARNS: I think I just took it point by point. You know, if she was going to win the point, she was going to earn it by hitting a winner or a great shot. That's what happened. She hit some great shots. Can't do anything about it. I hit some great shots. She can't do anything

about it. At the end of the day, it went my way.

Q. How are you able to not let the moment get to you at all?

PEYTON STEARNS: I just try not to think about it too much in the sense of where I am, what's happening, who I'm playing or where I'm playing kind of thing.

I remember in the first set, 5-4, when she was serving in the game, I told myself that it was 0-0. In the last game, as I was serving for it, I told myself I was down Love-30 at the start of the game just to kind of, like, flip the switch a little bit and get me thinking instead of thinking, like, Oh, my gosh, this is the match game, or this is the set game, I can close it out here kind of thing.

Q. Do you like being able to play on the side courts? Does that help with not letting the moment get to you or do you hope your next match is in a stadium?

PEYTON STEARNS: Honestly, I don't mind. I would love to play in a stadium. But wherever I play, I love it, so we're good.

Q. You've made a quick ascent after leaving UT. Has this been happening a little faster than you expected, the ranking, the wins?

PEYTON STEARNS: Yeah, for sure. I've kind of set goals in the rankings a little bit for myself, and I keep surpassing those goals, so I have to keep creating new ones, which is a great thing.

It's moving very quickly. But I have to learn very quickly, as well. Because of how fast it's moving, I don't have time to absorb a lot of things in.

But I think I do a pretty good job of learning them very quickly, so...

Q. Next you play either Vondrousova or Alexandrova. Your thoughts on possibly playing them?

PEYTON STEARNS: Yeah, I mean, whoever comes out on top, I'm ready to play whoever. Once I see who wins that match, I do the research, coach does the research, we go from there.



It's just another match, another day.

Q. What were the goals you set for yourself that you surpassed?

PEYTON STEARNS: So when I left college last year - last year, I can't keep track of time - I was about 400 in the world. I told myself by the end of the year I wanted to be top 200.

Q. End of this year?

PEYTON STEARNS: That was end of last year, top 200. I think I came just about 210. Then at the start of this year I told myself by the end of the year I wanted to be in the top 100. That happened I think in March or April, so it happened pretty quickly. Then I told myself I wanted to be top 75, and that happened pretty quickly.

Once I cracked that, I told myself I wanted to be top 50. Well, I just did that by winning today, well inside. Now I have to make a new goal (smiling).

Q. What was the decision to go pro and leave college? How hard of a decision was that?

PEYTON STEARNS: I think it was pretty easy. After my freshman year, I honestly thought about leaving, but it was a good thing I didn't. It was a little up in the air, 50/50. At the end of the day I was glad I went back and did what I did.

I kind of left college on a high note. I mean, you can't get much better than winning individuals, winning team, quarters of doubles, leaving from there.

I mean, it was a pretty easy decision. Actually, I made that decision in December of my sophomore year. I was out all fall with a foot injury, hadn't picked up a racquet and told the coach that I'm leaving after this spring, no matter what.

Q. Is there someone you watched growing up that you emulated with your forehand?

PEYTON STEARNS: Honestly, no. I've always kind of had that raw power, good technique. I honestly couldn't tell you. It was just there.

Q. Has it been measured how fast you hit it?

PEYTON STEARNS: Not that I know of.

Q. Did you have a goal for the US Open?

PEYTON STEARNS: No. I kind of came in, started working with a new coach in Cleveland two weeks ago, and we've just been working on bits and pieces, focusing on the fundamentals and going from there.

Told myself I'm going to go in, focus on those things, win or lose I'm going to take from it and move on. I've got a long career. What I'm doing is great so far.

Q. Now that you're going into the fourth round, any plans for how you're not going to think about how far you've come?

PEYTON STEARNS: Yeah, I mean, I'm just going to take it like I have been the last week, kind of just chill, not overemphasize what's going on. Hang out with my team.

My parents are in town. Some cousins flew in. Maybe go shopping. I don't know, just do normal stuff.

Q. Do you try to stay off social media?

PEYTON STEARNS: No, I go on it. I don't really care. I like TikTok, so kind of hard to avoid that and get all the notifications on it.

Q. A lot of UT fans in the crowd tonight?

PEYTON STEARNS: Yeah, I love all the burnt orange.

Q. You love all that?

PEYTON STEARNS: Yeah, absolutely.

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