

# US OPEN

Sunday, September 3, 2023

New York, New York, USA

## Frances Tiafoe

### Press Conference

F. TIAFOE/E. Hijikata

6-4, 6-1, 6-4

**THE MODERATOR:** Frances, straight sets. You know your game better than anybody else. What's your level of satisfaction with your game now going into week number two?

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, no, it's good. Yeah, I was actually a little bit nervous there in the beginning. Wasn't playing that great. I think at 4-All when I broke, I finally settled in and I took my game to another level. I made it super tough for him.

Got a little sloppy there at the end. Overall in the match, I think my game's in a good place. I'm moving well, serving pretty well. Can't really complain.

Yeah, winning matches is always good (smiling).

**THE MODERATOR:** Questions, please.

**Q. Fourth round last year was Rafa. He was probably the favorite going in, you'd think. This year, fourth round, you're the favorite. How do you compare those two experiences? Night and day from a year ago?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** 100%. Totally different, right? Last year, the goal was I wanted to get to the fourth round and play Rafa. That was, like, my goal when I seen the draw. Obviously one day at a time. Then we played, and obviously it was all hectic from there.

Now when you're playing a match, a guy you don't really know, new on the tour, beaten a lot of guys, beaten a lot of guys pretty convincingly, you're trying to feel it out.

I thought I did a good job taming him pretty well. Won pretty convincingly today. It's definitely a different seat to be in, playing matches where you're supposed to win in a major where you really want to do well and stuff. I think I'm handling it pretty well.



**Q. Coco was telling us already you and Ben are having some talk towards the occasion. She said she liked his shirt better than yours. Talk about the dynamics about how fun it's going to be, wanting to get to the semifinals, as well as saving energy?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, I mean, me, Ben, Coco, Chris, we all get along great. I like to see those guys play so well and do well. It's great.

Ben has wanted to play me at the Open for a long time. So he's going to be super excited. He's going to come out with a lot of energy.

I'm just going to have to tame him down, try to be the vet and get the win. It's going to be good. It's going to be a great atmosphere, I think great representation for people of color, right? Two people of color playing in the quarterfinals, huge match on Arthur Ashe. It's a pretty monumental moment. I'm pretty excited to compete against him. Hopefully it's a great battle.

**Q. Do you still feel your shirt was the better shirt in terms of the style?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, she's all loving Ben's light-skin energy, I guess (smiling). I think my outfit is much better, you know what I mean?

**Q. Your game seems to be just ever-increasing nuance and variety. Could you talk to us a little bit about variety and how important it is. Particularly, the dropshot, what the dropshot means to your game.**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, I mean, I think it's everything just at the right time. It's understanding the game. I think that's been the biggest thing. I have a lot of tools, just using it at the right time, being precise.

Don't go to the droppers too much, because then they're looking for it. Go just enough. Understanding where on the court to make it effective. Then bringing in the slice, coming to the net. I think it's more fun when you're out there just using your head and using different stuff and keeping your opponent on their toes.

Yeah, it becomes tough. It's tough to play against. Constantly trying to adapt to my opponent, what they're



bringing at me. I think I'm doing a good job. Yeah, just got to keep going.

**Q. You mentioned Ben just a little bit. How would you describe his style of play and how it fits with yours?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, I mean, he's just an extremely loud player. Hits the ball big, serves huge, pretty much serving at 150 today. Throwing his whole harm at that thing. He's so pumped up. Comes to the net. He's got great volleys. He's really athletic.

I mean, he's a great player. He's fun to watch. He's saying the loudest c'mon from the first point of the match till the last (smiling). He's yelling. He's got a lot of energy, so... He's great for the sport. It's cool to see a guy like that play.

For me, I enjoy playing lefties. I like playing lefties. I'm going to try to do a good job, make him play a lot of balls, just try to make it a really tough night for him.

We'll see. Not gonna lay out all the anecdotes right here.

**Q. When you win on Ashe, you hit the balls into the stands. What is the ritual and goal like when you're trying to fire balls into the stand?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** I'm not thinking about anything. I know I've just won. I'm just trying to hit the ball as far as I can. Someone catches it, great. Someone doesn't, also great. I don't really care at that point.

I just know I've won and I advanced. I mean, I'm sure a lot of people do it. For me, I mean, I usually do it automatically. Just kind of happens.

**Q. What did you think of Rinky? Did you have nerves in this? What do you think really clicked at 5-4 when you broke in that ninth game of the first set?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, 4-All when I broke.

Yeah, just played a good game. Started hitting the ball out a little more, started playing aggressive. In 30-All with deuce I had a jumping backhand cross.

After that, I just got freed up. I stopped guiding the ball, started hitting the ball, making him feel a lot of pressure. He was serving the whole serve. I was making him play a lot.

I think he's got good game. He's got great volleys. He came up with some great volleys. He serve-volleyed on me when he realized he was struggling from the back. He's got an arsenal. He's quick, moves well. Really good

backhand, so...

I think he can do all right. I think he's going to have a good career. Obviously we played in the fourth round, so clearly he's doing something right, right? Hats off to a guy like that. With his size, to be able to do what he did this week, it's great. I was happy for him.

**Q. Certainly imagine your match is going to be the night match. Ashe Stadium is such an incredible arena. Could you take us through the experience of being a single alone athlete in that arena? What does it feel like? Do you ever think to yourself, This is pretty cool? Kid comes from a small academy in Maryland, now is at the center of the tennis world out there.**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** This is really why I play my best at the Open every year. It's that kind of court, man. Yeah, obviously to be named Arthur Ashe, the biggest stadium we have, it's rocking, New York fans, everyone's drunk. It's just great.

Energy is insane. Honey Deuce'd out. This is cool. This is cool. When you have 23,000 people come and watch two people just go to war. People trying to figure it out. You're figuring it out against your opponent. It's pretty surreal.

I mean, just being a kid, a guy who grew up how I did, these fans is taking me in. Packing stadiums. Packed Louis the times I've played. It's been great. I think it's great that I've played at Ashe at night already. I feel comfortable doing that.

But, yeah, it's a cool ride. Definitely bring out my best.

**Q. Specifically when there's the huge roar, do you feel it in your body?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, definitely. Vibration, for sure. It's 23,000 people. Seems like there's a million people in there.

But yeah, I mean, I think more and more you do it, you get used to it. I mean, everyone loves people cheering for them, getting excited. I think it's the reason why you do the hard yards, why you put all the work in.

It's an unbelievable feeling, something that you want to continue. Try to just win the match.

**Q. You mentioned the loud roar. You also talked about how Ben is a loud, emotional player. Do you think in a matchup where you're the favorite, a lot of pressure, do you think it will be important not to get**

**caught up, play to the emotional style that Ben likes to play, or do you let it rip and play with emotion?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Just going to be me, whatever. I mean, you never want to -- I'm not really worried about what's on the other side of the court. I can't really worry about what Ben does, right? He's going to throw the kitchen sink at me. He's going to be up and down with emotions. That's just Ben.

I have to worry about my side, be super tough, take care of what I can take care of, holding serve. Obviously he's got one of the best serves in the game. Got to be a pro's pro. Let's not act like I'm not an emotional player at times. I definitely have my fair share of good and bad emotions. It's part of the game. It's part of who we both are. I think both show our personalities out there, and it's great for the sport.

**Q. Tommy talked about in between changeovers he was overly respectful, saying, You're serving great, trying to throw him off. Any non-tactical plans for Ben's serve?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** I've done that before. I've done that before to the guys.

Yeah, just going to have to wait and see, man. Again, we only practiced a couple times. We'll see. We'll honestly see. No idea.

**Q. Obviously you've talked about how much you love the energy on Ashe, being in front of the home crowd. Do you think it's going to feel different at all this far into the tournament sharing the court with another American? Do you think the crowd will feel different towards you?**

**FRANCES TIAFOE:** Yeah, I mean, I hope it's a 50/50. I mean, people show their respect to Ben. He's killing it this week, playing great tennis. Tommy has been playing unbelievable tennis. To beat him is a huge win.

I'm not hoping for it to be one-sided. I think it's going to be great energy all around. I think tennis is going to win that day ultimately.

We're both just going to go out there and compete and try to put on a show for everybody. At the end of the day I just want to go out there and win a tennis match. The bigger picture things, I think tennis is going to win. More important, an American is going to be in the semis.

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