

Western & Southern Open

Wednesday, August 16, 2017

Frances Tiafoe

Press Conference

F. TIAFOE/A. Zverev

4-6, 6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You're still feeling that match? How are you holding up now?

FRANCES TIAFOE: No, I'm feeling fine. Lucky it's two out of three (smiling).

I was just joking there, but yeah, pretty tired, mentally tired. You know, obviously, you know, stay pretty focused throughout, playing a guy like that, but overall feeling pretty good.

Q. A lot of fun to watch. A lot of big power. But it seemed like where you really started to get him on a lot of big points was the dropshot. When did you notice that was starting to be a big play for you?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Well, I had to watch some highlights of him, you know, seeing -- you don't see much. Especially last couple of weeks, he's been playing unbelievable. He stands pretty far back. I thought that could work. Luckily it was. I like the cat-and-mouse points.

Yeah, I was getting pretty tired, too, so I was using those to see how those work out.

Q. What was your strategy coming into today, seeing all the performances in recent weeks and over the year?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I was actually pretty excited for it. Obviously I really wanted to beat him. Strategy was just keep him out there. He has to be tired. He's played a tough couple of weeks, tough matches. A lot of night matches, too. Quick turnaround to play the next day.

I was just, like, if I can keep the rallies long and just keep making balls, you know, just run down a lot of balls and keep making him play an extra ball, even if I barely get it over the net, just keeping the balls in. And he was getting pretty frustrated, and there was times where he acted like he wasn't going to be there and he would step up.

It was a roller-coaster match. I was happy to get it over the line.



Q. So the headline is this is the biggest win of your career. What did it tell you about yourself?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I played a pretty good match today, I guess (smiling).

Yeah, these are wins that, you know, definitely can, you know, hopefully change your career the right way. Hopefully you don't go backwards from this.

But yeah, I mean, this is a big relief for me. You know, especially -- we grew up together playing junior Grand Slams, playing Under-12s, Under-14s. I have known him for forever. Seeing him rise like that, I was, like, Maybe I can do the same. Then he beat me twice, and was, like, All right, maybe I can't.

So me beating him today made me feel pretty good.

Q. A couple of things. Can you kind of give us what you were thinking at the end of the match, just the feelings and emotions that were running through you? Because you looked pretty joyful. And can you also take us back, the career and just getting to that point, the days growing up, youth matches, all that?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Yeah, I mean, I couldn't believe it. I was happy I finally beat him, because obviously we are going to be playing a lot the next 10, 15 years. Never gone from an 0-3 record before.

Yeah, happy I got him. And then obviously the from the junior days it's a lot different. We are just young kids, kind of grind each other down. It's ugly tennis. We were just out there, you know, cheating and doing all this, you know, crazy stuff.

But yeah, it's been a long journey for sure. I actually think I have been moving at a pretty good pace. He's moving at a crazy pace. Yeah, I'm happy for everything he's been doing. I hope he keeps going, and all the best to him in New York.

Q. Did you sense that you were going to outlast him? Could you feel it at the end maybe he wasn't moving as well or you kind of had him on a little bit of a string?

FRANCES TIAFOE: I felt that even after I won the first set. I was up a break early. I felt, you know, I was

feeling pretty good. Even though I lost a set, I was, like, if I keep it going, keep it going, and I went up two breaks early in the second. Got broken. I was pretty pissed about that. I played a pretty loose game.

I was just, like, if I can keep making balls, keep staying solid, moving the ball around, something good can happen today. And it did.

Q. Overall, just how are you feeling with your sort of pace, breaking through on the tour? Your first win over one of the top 20 guys, I think. How do you feel about how you're progressing overall?
FRANCES TIAFOE: Pretty good. I have lost a lot of tough matches. A lot. (Smiling.)

But, you know, I'm happy I have been putting myself in positions to win a lot of good matches. I'm happy it finally happened today. That's why I'm extremely joyful today. All the work you put in, it really makes sense now. You really appreciate it.

And now I just want to keep going. I don't want to stop now. I want to keep going and keep using this through the Open and try and finish the year.

Q. One of those tough matches was against John last year in New York. You get another shot at him. What are your thoughts?
FRANCES TIAFOE: Exactly. I'm extremely excited about it. We are good friends. It's always tough when you play good friends. We both left it out there last year at the Open.

It was unbelievable match. I think we opened that court up pretty good. I hope to play another good match on Stadium tomorrow.

Q. A lot of my Fed Head fans have been tweeting in that you avenged Federer's loss for him. What's your message to the Fed Heads tonight?
FRANCES TIAFOE: I don't even know what to say. Today I was lucky. I don't know what to say. Just happy to get it done today. Hopefully one day I can beat Roger (smiling).

Q. He's not here. Do you think you can win the tournament for us?
FRANCES TIAFOE: I will just take tomorrow. Still a lot of great players. Rafa just claimed No. 1. You know, Dominic Thiem. So many good players. A lot of people retired, unfortunately. Still a lot of good players in.

Q. Wondering when you formulate game plans these days how much of it is about your side of the court and what you do well versus the other side

and maybe what your opponent doesn't do as well?
FRANCES TIAFOE: I think every great game plan is having the guy adjust to you. You want to go out there, and, All right, I'm going to play my game and make him adjust to me. If that goes sideways, you have to adapt to the way he's doing.

As the match goes along, you go on so on and so forth. Just adjusting, trying to find ways, trying to problem-solve yourself.

Obviously there is no coaching out there and blah, blah, blah, but, you know, usually when you are playing your best, the guy has to adjust to you. You're playing aggressive. The other guy is struggling to get any looks at your serve. You're being so aggressive that they can't do much and stuff like that. You want to do that.

If that's not working, you've just got to keep problem-solving and keep trying to find ways.

Q. There is a lot to be said about the company you keep, and you've got a great peer in Alex, and friend. And while you learn a lot on court, what have you learned about how he handles himself off court?
FRANCES TIAFOE: I think he's way too mature (smiling). I think I can learn a couple of things from him. As far as that, he's got a great program, great people around him. His parents keep him pretty focused. I think that's why he's done some great things. I'm not saying I'm not focused, but he's pretty, you know, like this.

Just pretty impressive to see. You know, everyone is different. You know, everyone has their own paths. Everyone has their own style.

I'm relaxed, cracking jokes and being an idiot in the locker room and that kind of stuff. I'm trying to be a little more focused and be a little more detailed.

Q. How big is the Race to Milan to you at this point of the season?
FRANCES TIAFOE: I think it's big for all of us. I mean, I think Sascha is looking more towards London. I think he's been looking to London since the beginning of the year, but for everyone else, you know, it's great. You know, it's a new event.

ATP does an unbelievable job of promoting that. I'm getting tagged on it almost every week about it. They are making it really exciting for us and somewhere we all want to be at the end of the year. It's just like the little step before the real show. Hopefully we all are there in years to come. I think it's great. It's an honor

to be in the race. Hopefully I can make it.