

BNP Paribas Open

Sunday, March 12, 2017

Taylor Fritz

Press Conference

T. FRITZ/M. Cilic

4-6, 7-5, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. That's a big-time win. Talk about how you're feeling?

TAYLOR FRITZ: Amazing, you know, especially with all the crowd support. And just being at this tournament, my whole -- my family was there. Raquel, Raquel was going crazy. It was amazing. Just the whole experience with the crowd, how I came back in the match, it's just, like, words can't describe it, really.

Q. The chants? Have you heard the chants of your name out there?

TAYLOR FRITZ: Oh, yeah. It's pretty amazing.

Q. I guess describe your feeling as you went up to shake hands. You were trying to be real stoic, and then after you shook hands and then you let loose. What was that moment of trying to keep it inside for five seconds where you wanted to be sportsman, like, or whatever?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I wasn't really even thinking about it, to be honest. I don't know. It was pretty normal. I don't really go crazy or anything until -- I mean, I usually don't go crazy at all actually. But the crowd was just so electric, after I shook his hand, they just got me into it. I don't know.

Q. Since you just beat a Grand Slam champion, does this mean you're going to be a Grand Slam champion?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I really hope so, but it's a long way away and a lot of hard work. Hopefully (smiling).

Q. You said coming into the tournament that you thought you were playing really great, and I guess that's showing. Just talk about some of the things you're doing well.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Well, I mean, we talk about, like, complete -- just different levels in the match. I started off, like, I just -- I was definitely slow. I thought I was going to get bageled in that first set. It was 4-0, 4-0, break point. I thought for sure I was going to get bageled.



I had the trainer come. And I took some Advil before the match, because I was kind of feeling my knee a bit, the same knee injury I had months ago that I took time off to get better. But maybe the hot cream the trainer was working on, it worked, but I started feeling a lot better, like, I could move. I got into it.

I was just making a lot of balls. It was pretty heavy, the conditions out there. So different from during the day. The ball wasn't flying much. I felt like it was tough to put the ball away. I felt like neither one of us was getting as many free points on our serves as we normally would.

I thought the main thing today was how I returned serve. I thought I returned much better than normal. I don't think it's one of my strongest -- the strongest parts of my game. I thought I did a really good job of returning, you know, one of the best servers in the game's serve throughout that match.

Also, I thought I did a pretty good job of competing and kind of just sticking in the match and staying solid.

Q. Obviously not just tonight, but how much of a goal or priority is this Milan race to you? You're one of the people in the category for it. Do you pay attention? Check that page of the app frequently? How much...

TAYLOR FRITZ: If I am going to be totally honest, I check it a lot.

I do want to be there. It's something I feel like it would be a huge honor to be there, because there's so many new people that came up at the end of last year and this year, and the whole the Next Gen campaign. So many new, amazing players that just make the race so much tougher. It's something I just really want to -- I just really want to make it for the first year. I think it would be really cool to be in it the first year.

I'm just working really hard. I do check it a lot. I'm definitely looking at it. I'm definitely, oh, this one is helping me a lot for Milan.

Q. How did you hold your nerve when he broke back in the third?

TAYLOR FRITZ: When he broke back?

Q. Yeah.

TAYLOR FRITZ: I just told myself, you know, like, I made first serves that game. That was my goal going into that last service game was just to make a lot of first serves. He returned really well that game. He played a great game.

Instead of, you know, getting really down on myself, I just told myself, You know what? At least I put myself in that opportunity to serve out the match. I thought I had been doing a really good job of returning his serve, so I thought there was a chance I could break back.

And especially after I lose my serve, I go, Oh, now I really, really don't want to lose this match. I will be thinking about it for the next week about how I choked.

Q. You mentioned the knee. Is it a concern that it's still bothering you? Have you learned anything about when to kind of stay off it and keep playing on it?

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, it's really -- it's really -- I don't know the word I'm looking for. It's kind of depressing, in a way, to feel it after putting so much time into getting it better and sacrificing a lot of time to get it better.

You know, I would drive about 45 minutes to physical therapy, be there for three hours and drive about an hour back. It was a big chunk of my day that I could have been doing a lot of better things.

But it loosened up. I played without pain from the whole, like, end of the first set on. And I played the last five weeks without pain.

So I really don't know. I feel like I have been doing all the right things. I think if I stay on top of it, it should be fine. But, yeah, it's a bit worrying that I start feeling it again.

Q. What is it? Could you just give...

TAYLOR FRITZ: That's the thing. It's kind of like -- I don't know. I have never really gotten a for-sure answer on it. There's nothing, like, wrong with my knee, because I have had all the scans, like, everything. There is nothing actually wrong with it.

But, you know, I feel it. Like, I'm not making stuff up. I don't know. I sometimes get this pain. I think it's just the way I use my muscles. I think I put too much stress on that knee.

So I think it's just a matter of strengthening other parts of my knee. I think that's what's going to just get it better. It's just more strengthening on the areas, muscles around the knee.

Q. You get Jaziri next, so an unseeded guy, which might be good, but he's a solid veteran player. Talk about that match and how much you might know about him?

TAYLOR FRITZ: Last time I played him, we had an absolute battle in the Guadeloupe challenger. I came off the court, like, wow, that guy is amazing. I thought I played some of my best tennis last time I played him, and he got me in a long three-setter. So I have a lot of respect for him knowing the level he can play.

I know I'm going to have to bring my best tennis, and I know he sees this opening in the draw as a huge opportunity for him, as well. I know he's going to be bringing his best tennis. It's going to be a good match.

Q. Going back to goals and objectives, last year you missed the qualifications for Olympics by basically one spot. I was wondering if that bothered you? And how much it means to you, how important is it to represent the United States in your tennis career?

TAYLOR FRITZ: Well, I'm wearing a USA shirt right now, actually, with an American flag right here. So I guess it's pretty important for me. You know, I love playing for my country. I would have really liked to go down to Rio, but, you know, it is what it is. I got to play. I got to play Atlanta and I had a good result in Atlanta. I guess that's the silver lining behind the whole situation.

I would really like to represent my country in the future, and just really help out American tennis however I can.

Q. Playing with the USTA, what did you think of the Green Dot ball?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I never had to use that. You're talking about the --

Q. The softball.

TAYLOR FRITZ: The softball. Yeah, I never had to play with that. They implemented that rule after I was already aged out.

But I'm not sure how I feel about it. Maybe 8 and under? I'm not sure exactly. Maybe it prevents injuries or extra stress on the body. Like, I'm not entirely sure.

But I think you should just play tennis, to be honest, just regular tennis. That's just -- I'm saying that just because that's what I did.

Q. For a while you were sort of the top 18 year old, 19 year old... (Indiscernible). Are you conscious of where the others are in your age group? Are there others in your age group we should be looking for?

TAYLOR FRITZ: Of course I think anyone would be

lying if they're saying they are not paying attention to the whole competition that all of us juniors, like, 18 and 19-years-old have with each other. We all want to do better and it's healthy, really healthy.

Like, I want to do better than these guys, like, guys like Riley, Francis, Mo, Jared. They are all some of my best friends. Riley was the best man at my wedding. We all want to just go at it with each other, but we all also want to see each other do well at the same time, I guess, because we all just want to move up, and it's a lot of motivation to kind of go back and forth with these guys on the rankings, with the results.

It's something that I feel like every generation needs to kind of push you that extra bit to get better.