

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

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## Denis Shapovalov

Press Conference



D. SHAPOVALOV/F. Tiafoe

6-7, 6-4, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Good match. There is a great sense of camaraderie out there with you two guys. Talk about your relationship with Frances.**

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, I think we're definitely pretty close. It kind of developed throughout the years on tour. Honestly, in juniors, we kind of knew of each other, but he was really good at a young age and I was just starting up. Obviously I saw him around, but we didn't hang around too much.

Then once we started playing pros, we played Laver Cup together, all this, and we just started getting closer and closer, and obviously we have practiced together a bunch of times. We've played each other a bunch of times. It feels like every time we play we kind of bring out the best in each other. It's always an honor to be on the court with him.

**Q. Is it tougher or easier to have to play him than just anybody else because the stakes are also so high?**

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: For sure, I think it's tough in the sense that I wish the best for him, and I love seeing him go deep in tournaments and doing as good as possible. But, you know, when you're on the other side, like, for example today when you win, obviously you feel great, but part of me does also feel kind of bad, you know, just in the sense that he couldn't go on in the tournament. I know he deserves it as much as I do. He works so hard. He's such a great person.

But, yeah, in that sense, it's definitely tough, but I think once we get on the court, once we start playing, it's just tennis, you know. We just play our sport. We both try to win.

After the match, obviously we're good friends, we just spoke in the locker room. Yeah, we're all cool.

**Q. Is there something that's clicking in your generation? On paper it looks like a big sort of breakthrough for this generation, even if you have had occasionally spikes before.**

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, there is definitely a lot of

young talent coming in. You know, it's just that point in the ATP, you know, you still have kind of the legends, you know, Rog, Rafa, still there on top, but you have a lot of newcomers with talent kind of gunning for them. Every week it feels like someone new is making a breakthrough and playing well.

I think it's really healthy for the sport to see a couple new stars in the game, and, you know, the fans get to kind of watch something new other than the top 4.

**Q. You will meet Roger Federer for the first time tomorrow. How does it feel to play against him, to earn this place against him? And, as well, to share a semifinal with Felix, it's the first time two teenagers of the same country are that far since Chang and Sampras. Your thoughts on that?**

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, it's kind of crazy to share this with Felix. I was just thinking in the locker room how far back we go, and from the national groupings when we were 8 and 9 years old, so it's so crazy to see how far we have come.

And at such a young age, I feel like both of us have such of bright future ahead of us. It's really great to see him doing well. Honestly, it's not a shocker for me that he's gone this far, that he's doing so well.

Like I have been saying for a couple years now, it was just a matter of time with Felix, you know, being healthy and just playing well at the right time. I see, first of all, how talented he is and how talented he was from a young age. But it's not only that. He could be so talented, but I have never seen someone work as hard as him.

He's so professional about how he goes about his things, from the morning to when he sleeps at night. He's always thinking like a pro athlete. So honestly, I kind of look up to him in that sense. You know, I feel like he's always on top of those things. It's just great to see.

In terms of playing Roger, yeah, it's definitely a matchup I have been looking forward to, I think, my whole life (smiling). It's going to be a dream come true to play him in such a big event over here, and the stakes are so high, semifinal match of a Masters 1000 against your idol. It's just a dream come true.



**Q. Besides you and Felix, there is also a women's Canadian tennis that has had protagonism the past weeks, months even. What would you consider what's going on in Canada? What are you doing right? What has been the key for this growth that has been coming up in Canadian tennis?**

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, that's a good question. Honestly, yeah, Bianca, obviously if that's who you're talking about, she's another girl that, you know, I have got the chance to grow up with her. You know, we are both from Toronto. Obviously we both played all the same events, and we're pretty close. It's unbelievable to see her doing so well.

I know she was struggling with a couple of injuries, you know, early in her career, last couple of years. First of all, it's great to see her on the court healthy, playing really well. Honestly, it's insane what she's doing. I mean, not even I could believe it, and I know how good and talented she is. So it's great to see it from her.

She's a wonderful person. You know, we are really, really close and really good friends, so it's really nice to see that.

But in terms of tennis, I mean, I think we all kind of come from different ways. Felix comes from the program in Montreal. Bianca comes from the program in Toronto. I come from my own team and my own ways. I don't know really what is going on, but I think if I say, for the men's side, it's been kind of almost a rivalry with me and Felix, and I feel like we have been able to kind of thrive on each other's results and push each other.

Just like this week, every time I see him win, I'm, like, Come on, you know, let me try to win, as well, and see how far we can get together. It's just a healthy thing we have had since juniors. You know, I remember when he was climbing up the rankings, and I won Wimbledon, and then he won US Open. So we're always constantly competing. I think it's just so great for us and so great for the country.

**Q. You just mentioned Roger Federer was your idol growing up. How is it different for you to go into the match when you play against him than maybe playing against another opponent?**

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, I try to put on, like, some tennis sunglasses so I don't see him (smiling) so I see blurry or something, or I see someone else on the other side.

No, honestly, I'm going to try to go about it the same way. And I'm really happy with how the week's gone so far, so I'm just going to go out there, enjoy myself, just

have a good time on the court and give it my all. You know, that's all I can ask at this point.

Obviously Roger is a really tough opponent, so it's going to be a really difficult match. I'm just happy to kind of have the chance to play him here in the semis. Yeah, that's pretty much it. I'm going to go out there, fight for every point, and see what I can do.

**Q. The Rogers Cup semifinal two years ago, you rode a high to one semifinal, but to produce consistent results, you have to go through a maturation process. Can you talk about that process? And also, you're finally cracking the top 20 in the world with this win today. Talk about how that feeling has been a long way coming.**

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, I think, yeah, it definitely means a lot to make my third semifinals of a Masters event. First of all, I feel like I'm doing a good job with my team to try to peak at the right moments and really bring out my game in the biggest stadiums and the biggest tournaments. I feel like that's a huge credit to them. They are really making sure that I'm playing well the right weeks.

And then again, it's just, like, it's just more reassurance that I'm kind of doing the right things, that I'm constantly improving and my game is there. You know, when I made that semifinals in Montreal, it was kind of, like, it felt like a one-off for me. I had those two, three weeks of insanity of, you know, just playing ridiculous, and then all of a sudden I was kind of struggling again.

So when I did make semifinals in Madrid, it was reassurance for me that my level is there, that I'm capable of doing it.

And today, again, now I know in the back of my mind that my game is there to make semifinals of these big events. Definitely gives me that confidence to keep going forward.

In terms of top 20, like I just said, it's another kind of comforting feeling for me to try to keep going and potentially, you know, hopefully break the top 10. You know, it would be unbelievable to do that.

But it's a process. You know, obviously I'm happy with where I am today, and like you said, it's just kind of a step forward in my career.

**Q. My question is, as a young player, playing your idol tomorrow, what influences on your game were out there, like, guys like Federer and Djokovic? Did any of those players have any influence on your game? And if so, what parts?**

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, for sure. I watched a lot

of all of them, really. Roger, obviously I was always looking at his backhand, the way he hits it. I always tried to kind of copy him. Really just build my game, like, and play like he does. Aggressive, coming in. He was always not afraid to kind of go for his shots and close the point at the net. I feel like that, just watching him do that so much kind of built my personality on the court, and I try to do the same.

In terms of Novak, I have been really trying to study his game in terms of how he returns, how well he moves on the court. You know, growing up, I was, again, a really big fan of Novak, just because, one, his game is unbelievable, the way he moves, but also, you know, he was always -- I really looked up to him, because he was always that kind of No. 3 guy after Roger and Rafa. And he really proved himself that he's capable to break through. I really looked up to him.

Obviously Rafa's fighting spirit. It's really something that I tried to match and make my own. The way he fights for every point, he doesn't give you an inch. When I had the chance to play him the couple times that I did, you really feel it on the court. You know, even when you have 40-Love on your serve, you feel like you need to win that point, otherwise it's going back to deuce. He doesn't give you an inch. I really try to bring that into my game.

And honestly, I feel like those three guys have helped me learn so much in the game. Yeah, it's three great guys to kind of look up to when you're young.