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Charleston Open



Friday, April 5, 2024

Danielle Collins def. Elise Mertens
6-3, 6-4
Quarterfinal

MODERATOR: Danielle, another straight set symphony into the semifinals here in Charleston. Give us your real thoughts on the match and your performance today.

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah. Elise and I have had a couple of close matches previously. I think with her game and over the course of her career she's proved that she can beat anybody on any given day. She can be really tricky. So I knew that coming out I was going to have to hit some hard shots and try to push her around the court as much as I could. And, yeah, I went out swinging, went for some big targets.

The wind was a little bit tricky at times. Not easy. You have to make adjustments during these types of days. But I got off to a good start, and, yeah, I'm just thrilled to be keeping this streak alive.

Q. I kind of would like to have whatever you're having. Where is all of the immense energy coming from at this point?

DANIELLE COLLINS: I mean, you know, like I said earlier in the week, like, this is my last year, and I want to go out with a bang and just play my best tennis and do the best that I can. Obviously, I think you're always striving to play your best tennis, and sometimes it works out really well, and other times you hit bumps in the road. And I think earlier in the year, and even towards the end of last year, like I was playing really great tennis and had some close matches. It's just

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like the difference of like this much in some of those outcomes, and the margins can be so slim, especially in these long three-set matches. And when sets are going 7-5 and 7-6 -- and I had a lot of those last year, and it was just a few points here and there. So now I'm kind of dealing with those situations when the sets get closer, like a little bit better, and I feel like I'm also doing some things in the beginning of the matches, too, where I get off to a good start, and that's working in my favor.

Q. When you're out on the court, are you thinking of maybe the intangibles of the streaks or impacts the confidence, but are you thinking actively about, oh, if I win this match, it'll be this number, or that's not a part of the thought process?

DANIELLE COLLINS: For me, I feel like it's not so much time focusing on the process versus like the outcome. I feel like when I focus more on my process and what I have to do to get there, I am more focused; I'm more centered. I don't play with as much pressure. And I think that can be hard to do because you obviously -- like we all have goals and we want to accomplish those things, so you can think sometimes like, oh, I want to make quarterfinals this week or I want to win the tournament. You can't think about those things too much while you're playing because if you're thinking about that, then you can lose track of what you need to do in your strategy and in your routine.

So I feel like I've done a really great job recently of my routines between points, visualizing and strategizing as well. I feel like I've learned a lot over the last couple of years, and I think there was a big adjustment that I needed to make coming from college tennis to the



professional level traditionally, and it took me a little bit of time to figure some things out. Yeah.

Q. If you had it to do over, would you do it the same way, do the college first?

DANIELLE COLLINS: Oh, definitely. I mean, I don't necessarily think that college has to be for everyone. I think college is a great thing, if that's what you want to do, and that's the route that you want to go. I didn't feel at 15, 16, 17, 18 that I was quite mature enough to be able to deal with the stresses and pressure of the tour. And I think there was a push by most of the people in my life around that time for me to go to college. My parents didn't graduate from university. They didn't go to college. My brother did. But I really saw education as a way to open up the doors for other opportunities, not just with my tennis, but outside of tennis.

Q. What did you major in?

DANIELLE COLLINS: I majored in media studies. Yeah. So, yeah, for me I think it was the right decision. I needed more time to mature, evolve, physically, mentally, emotionally, and I would definitely do it over again.

Q. This week, I think, after Miami there's all these whispers of is this person going to pull out because they just won the tournament and now the draw that you've had, when you look at the last four days is there one or two things that pop up of being like, damn, I've done that this week?

DANIELLE COLLINS: Yeah. I think, luckily in Miami I was only playing an hour, hour 20 minutes, hour 30 minutes at a time on court. So I didn't have a lot of long matches really until the end of the



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tournament when I played Elena. So I also had two days off before I came here basically. So I had a little bit of time to rest and recover.

I do think it's tricky going from hard to clay, especially with the footing and getting yourself comfortable with the bounces, and it's a little bit different game style, and you have to be able to adapt to that. I think ideally, of course, you would want to have more time. But I was playing such good tennis, and Charleston is one of our favorite tournaments, I think across the board. I think if you ask most of the players on tour, this is a player favorite event. And I love coming here. I have so many friends in Charleston. Two of my closest friends live here now. And so it was a no-brainer to come out here.

I also felt good physically, so it was kind of like, let's just try to keep it rolling and see how I do. And I think it should give me some confidence now the rest of the clay court season to have some good wins and to feel confident with my ability on the clay court, because the last couple of years I haven't gotten to play as much on the clay as I would have liked to because, unfortunately, with the timing of my injuries and surgeries, a lot of times that's fallen around the clay court season. And I've always thought that I have a versatile enough game to be able to do well on the clay. I made quarterfinals, I think, at French Open one year. And I also won a 250 in Palermo, and I actually won the 250 in Palermo, and then I went on hardcourts like the next week and played San Jose. So I've kind of been trying to remind myself of that. Anything is possible, so just have to try.

Q. What did you write on the camera?

DANIELLE COLLINS: "You only live once." It's one of my favorite sayings. It always has been. I used to have a scooter in college, like a little Vespa-like scooter that I would drive around, and I



had a big sticker on it that said YOLO, and I -- yeah, it was like a nickname, too. D-YOLO for a while. So, yeah, just a lot of fun vibes and energy around it. I love YOLO.

Q. Should we bring that back, D-YOLO?

DANIELLE COLLINS: I feel like it's kind of outdated, but like I kind of like that. You know how phrases kind of just like get you excited or you're like, yeah, that really resonates with me. YOLO, yeah. YOLO is my life. Sometimes when I say YOLO, my friends are like, oh, that's so cringe. I'm like, yeah, but sometimes like the cringey things are actually, like, great.

Q. Stop trying to make "fetch" happen.

End of Interview