

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

## John Isner

Press Conference



J. ISNER/F. Auger-Aliassime

7-6, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Another classic Isner-type match, slim margins. You seem to be able to handle so many of these tiebreak situations well. Were you surprised by today's outcome?**

JOHN ISNER: No. I mean, I knew it was going to be tough. Felix is such an incredible player. These conditions are good for me.

I think I knew at the very worst I was going to be able to make it a close match and make it come down to a few points here and there. That was the case today.

Certainly there are some things I wish I would have done better, but all in all I'm happy to win the match and happy to move on.

**Q. How was the heat out there for you today? Were you glad to be first on, first off?**

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I mean, it's pretty hot but it's been -- you know, I have played in hotter Miami conditions before. I like playing during the day. I like playing first up.

I mean, I would say most players don't prefer playing first up at 11:00, but I like it since I'm up early anyways. So I like being first up. You sort of know your fate early, and I'll be back at the hotel here in a little bit and get to enjoy the rest of the day.

**Q. I just want to ask you, I know you don't live in the state of Florida anymore, but you spent quite a bit of time training. I wanted to ask you, first of all, how that was formative in your development as a player, being able to train at Saddlebrook with some of those other guys all together. Just those years that you trained in this heat and humidity, do you think that's helped you in Miami? Is that one of the reasons you have done well here, do you think?**

JOHN ISNER: Well, to answer the second part of your question first, I do think it's a reason that I have done well here. I like playing in hot conditions. It's tough, for sure, when you're out there sweating a lot and you're losing a lot of fluids out there. You have to do the right things before the match to prevent your body from, you know, I guess cramping up out there.

I know how to take care of myself, so I do that. Playing in hot conditions is something that I do enjoy, because I think it suits my game well.

When I finished college, I knew first and foremost I needed to get out of Georgia. As much as I didn't want to leave Athens, I knew I had to make a decision for my career to get down to Tampa and get a little apartment there and just start practicing and training and try and get better at tennis.

That's what I did. It was very crucial in my development. I had a lot of great players I was able to practice with, a little bit older than me, James Blake and Mardy Fish. My first-ever coach, who was very instrumental to my career, Craig Boynton, was in Tampa. That's where I met him. Everything just fell in place for me.

I consider myself very fortunate to have made my move to Tampa and to have practiced up at Saddlebrook with a bunch of great guys. It meant a lot to my career. I'm not there anymore, but I do realize how much of a huge role that played in the development of my career.

**Q. You're playing well. You could probably win a lot more matches in the coming years. Nevertheless you're in a generation well into their 30s, Sam, Stevie. You have fewer years rather than more left before you. Can you just compare your generation to the one that's coming up and pushing you guys a little bit? You know, Taylor and Reilly and those guys?**

JOHN ISNER: Yeah. Look, I think I kind of consider myself a tweener, because I'm still a couple years older than Sam and I guess three or four years older than Stevie, maybe four years older than Stevie, and I'm a few years younger than guys like Mardy, James, and Andy.



Look, I think the older guys currently, we've done a lot of good things, myself, Sam, Stevie, and Jack. He's not even 30 yet.

The group of young guys coming up that we all know about right now with Taylor and Frances and Tommy and Reilly, Mackie who I played the other night, there are some very, very good players. They have extremely bright futures.

But I think the onus is on them to keep doing the right things, because the best guys in the world that are their age are extremely good. We know that. We are talking about Medvedev and Tsitsipas, the guys that are top 10 in the world and under 25 years old.

So our young guys have a lot of work to do, I think, to try to get to that level. They are pretty close. So I don't think the state of American men's tennis is too bad right now.

**Q. When guys get, you know, up into their 30s and stuff, they often make a run, they often give it one more shot, get into shape and stuff. Do you guys feel like, speaking for yourself, but do you think guys like you and Sam and maybe even Stevie a little bit are being denied stuff because of the pandemic, that you can't really get that momentum going to make a big late career run?**

JOHN ISNER: No, I don't think we have been denied. I mean, I think a lot of players in general have been denied just playing opportunity. But we understand that, you know, we understand why our sport was shut down and where we're happy to be back playing.

But certainly I can speak for myself in saying that over the last year, this is right about when our sport shut down last year, and I have taken a lot of time off. My racquets have been in the closet for a lot of the time. It's been very, very weird for a tennis player and myself, someone that's used to literally playing the exact same schedule pretty much for 12, 13 years, of course that was interrupted last year, so for me, the most important thing was to focus on my family and spend a lot of time with them.

Tennis has been secondary for me for a large part of this last year, you know, but I have always -- one thing I do do well is I keep myself in good shape. I enjoy working out, and I have always known that as long as I keep myself in good shape, that's going to pay off down the road. Whether it's here or somewhere else, the rest of this year, we'll see.

But it has been tough I think for older players. The lockdown or shutdown of our sport is a bit tougher on us than younger guys. But it is what it is.

**Q. A John Isner classic, no breakpoints today. Have you enjoyed living life this way, playing these kind of matches where it just boils down to a handful of points? Is embracing that part of the challenge for you to be successful?**

JOHN ISNER: Look, I enjoy them when I win these types of matches, for sure. I have lost lots of matches like that. It's frustrating when you lose a match it comes down to a point here or there. It's rewarding when you do win a match when it comes down to a point here or there.

I know that a lot of times that's just how it is for me. I could very easily be talking to you a loser and going home tomorrow, but I'm not, and we'll see what I can do, see if I can keep building and keep improving and keep advancing in this tournament.

**Q. The irony today was the last point was a 13-shot rally.**

JOHN ISNER: Well, yeah. He was serving very well and making a good amount of first serves. When he did make a first serve it was very, very tough on me. I think, if I remember correctly, I think he took off a bit of pace on that first serve on match point.

So it allowed me to at least get into the point and probably one of the best points I played all match. You know, he had an uncharacteristic error at the end, but I'll take it.

**Q. I want to ask you about your next opponent, Roberto Bautista Agut. You have played against him four times and you have a positive head-to-head record, 3-1. You played in Miami in 2019. How do you imagine your next match against Roberto?**

JOHN ISNER: It's going to be very tough. Everyone knows how solid he is as a player. He does so many things so well. Last time we played was two years ago at this event, so I know that it's going to be a close match. It's going to be a tough match. He's just rock solid. He doesn't give you anything.

I'll be looking forward to the challenge, and it's going to be a fun match. I'm looking forward to it because he's a great guy, a great player, a good friend of mine also. It will be a lot of fun playing against him.

There is one thing for sure is that I'm going to have to play well if I have any chance of beating him because he's just too solid if I don't. So we'll see.

**Q. How pleased are you today with your serving**

**performance?**

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I was very pleased. Probably the best I have served all year. I haven't played many matches this year, and even for a guy like myself, I do need to play matches to get my serve feeling good.

In my first-round match I served very well in the second and third sets. Today I served well throughout the whole match, so that's a good sign going forward, especially in conditions like this that I have sort of I guess found my service game again. We'll see if it can continue to pay off for me.

But very happy with how I served today and how I backed up my serve. It allowed me to win the match I think.

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