

# World Tennis Gazette

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## In Loss to Djokovic, Tiafoe Raises Question

With Ball Kids Restricted  
By COVID 19 Precautions,  
Shouldn't the Time Between  
Points Be Expanded?

By JOHN MARTIN  
MELBOURNE (VIA  
SAN DIEGO) — It was  
one of Frances Tiafoe's  
finest Grand Slam match-  
es.

But when Novak  
Djokovic finally overcame  
Tiafoe in four sets in the  
second round of this year's  
Australian Open, both  
players agreed the key  
point was a correct but un-  
timely call and penalty lev-  
ied by the chair umpire.

In a somewhat unusual  
circumstance, the chair  
umpire who made the call  
against Tiafoe was the  
same umpire, Damien Du-  
musois of France, who as-  
sessed a controversial  
time violation against  
Djokovic in last year's  
Australian Open Men's  
Final.

Last year, Djokovic  
shrugged off the call and  
defeated Dominic Thiem,  
6-4, 4-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, to  
win the championship..

This year, Djokovic de-  
feated Tiafoe. 6-3, 6-7 (7-  
3), 7-6 (7-2), 6-3

ESPN described the  
crucial point:

"Both players were on  
serve in the fourth set and  
looked headed for another  
tiebreaker when Tiafoe  
was given a time violation



*John Martin/World Tennis Gazette*

**Frances Tiafoe, top, losing in 5 sets to  
Roger Federer in the 2017 Australian  
Open. Novak Djokovic, below, winning  
the 2020 final against Dominic Thiem.**



on his serve. He lost his  
temper — and then his  
serve — to fall behind 3-4.  
He didn't win another game  
in the match, which finished  
with a double fault."

"These kinds of things  
are just unlucky," Djokovic  
told reporters later. "He de-  
served to have his first  
serve."

Tiafoe agreed. "I feel like  
that kind of broke the match,  
honestly. And he ran off with  
it. Hats off to him, but that  
was a terrible ending to the  
match, to such a high quality  
match."

Tiafoe's reaction — los-  
ing his temper and then  
standing aside on each  
point as Djokovic served to  
win the next game — pro-  
pelled him toward defeat.

"Could I have reacted  
better? Yes," Tiafoe admit-  
ted. "I mean, that just broke  
me. I'm out there battling  
World No 1 and like he  
needs any more help?"

A reporter said: "You  
probably heard that Novak  
openly sympathized with  
what happened to you on  
the court today."

Tiafoe said he appreci-  
ated Djokovic's remark, then  
explained why he took a few  
extra seconds:

"If we're gonna go and not  
use the towels with COVID  
and everything with the kids,

## Riveting Match Dissolves In Final Moments After Time Violation Call

I get it," he said. "I'm here for it, but let's have more time. Especially on a court like Laver."

What Tiafoe fell victim to was a pandemic precaution that prevents ball kids from running towels out to players between points.

Instead, players must position their towel at the back of the court (on each change-over), and walk to it from wherever a point ends.

Tiafoe described how this could easily be on the minds of many of the world's top players.

"If I'm walking all the way over here, to then go here, to then go to the line — after we play a long point, I'm not going to sprint to my towel and come back. I'm not breaking records."

The question is worth asking — and answering — in a calm, quiet session among the game's administrators and

players, not on a tense, courtside standoff between player and chair umpire, a standoff Tiafoe sensibly did not undertake.

A close review of match statistics shows

Tiafoe came stunningly close to Djokovic in several key categories, including aces (Djokovic 26, Tiafoe 23), first serves in play (Tiafoe 78, Djokovic 74), first serve points won (Djokovic 62, Tiafoe 58), second serve points won (Tiafoe 34, Djokovic 27).

We're left with Djokovic's words of praise for Tiafoe:

"I was impressed with the way he was competing," Djokovic told reporters afterward. "He served very well. He fought hard. I thought we both played at a pretty high level. He pushed me to

the very limit."

**"I mean, that just broke me. I'm out there battling World No 1 and like he needs any more help?" —**

***Frances Tiafoe  
Feb 10, 2021***

**February 10, 2021, Melbourne, Australia**

**Novak Djokovic (SRB) defeats Frances Tiafoe (USA)**

**6-3, 6-7 (3), 7-6 (2), 6-3**

**3 hours, 30 minutes**

**Djokovic 26 ACES Tiafoe 23**

**Djokovic 127.3 mph FASTEST FIRST SERVE Tiafoe 134.8 mph**

**Djokovic 119.3 mph AVERAGE FIRST SERVE Tiafoe 118.6mph**

**Djokovic 53 of 115 UNRETURNED SERVES Tiafoe 41 of 140**

**Djokovic 0 of 0 SERVE & VOLLEY PTS WON Tiafoe 6 of 9**

**DJOKOVIC 12 of 16 NET PTS WON Tiafoe 23 of 39**

**DJOKOVIC 72 of 143 BASELINE PTS WON Tiafoe 56 of 122**