CHEEKY, FEARLESS, AND VERY MUCH HIMSELF : BUBLIK INTO THE LAST 16 IN NEW YORK

Alexander Bublik arrived in New York looking fresh, and his tennis showed it. After winning back-to-back titles in Gstaad and Kitzbuhel on Clay, he chose to skip the Toronto and Cincinnati Masters to go home, recharge and reset—he even joked he was on "paid vacation." The pause mattered. He came into the US Open calling it "like the first tournament of the year," and he played like someone who had pressed reset on the season.

In the opening round, against 2014 champion Marin Cilic, Bublik served big, took the ball early and moved through in straight sets, 6-4 6-1 6-4 and never letting the veteran settle. It was not entertaining or typical Bublik show, it was professional, quick, and quietly confident. The sort of start he had missed many a times in his career.

In Round 2 he faced Australian wild card Tristan Schoolkate and kept the same calm tempo. No drama, no fascinating things, just good hitting and clean serving for a routine 6-3 6-3 6-3 win. By then, he had not dropped serve once, a streak that became one of the stories of the first week in New York.

Round 3 was the real test, played under the lights against No 14 seed and home favourite Tommy Paul. Bublik relied on his serve and touch to come through a five-set battle, 7-6(5) 6-7(4) 6-3 6-7(5) 6-1, reaching the fourth round in New York for the first time. He hit 22 aces, won 83% of his first serve points and used his trademark drop shots again and again. On court afterwards, in his post-match interview, Pam Shriver praised his serve. Bublik smiled and replied, "Yes, it is," before joking that facing the world No 1 might finally be when he drops a few serves

By the end of the third round, the numbers told the story. He had not been broken once in the tournament, the stat suggests that 55 service games in a row. The break before New York had clearly sharpened his biggest weapon. This time it was not just about flashy shots, but about steady focus, calmness and control.

It was vintage Bublik, cheeky, open, and completely himself. But more than that, his run in New York showed how much the summer break had helped him. Alongside his usual flair, he brought a steadier approach, turning style into results. From beating Cilic, in straights to Schoolkate in straights and then Paul in a five set thriller, he showed that when he manages his schedule and keeps his focus, he has the game to trouble anyone.

Next: World No. 1 Jannik Sinner.