

Davis Cup Finals

Thursday, 25 November 2021

Team Australia

Alexei Popyrin

Press Conference



B. GOJO/A. Popyrin

7-6, 7-5

Croatia - 1

Canada - 0

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How do you define that? How do you explain that result? In Melbourne also when you played there was so incredibly tight, but there were those chances in the first set with the breakpoints that you had.

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah, I would say this is probably the most painful loss I have had. Yeah, I had chances. I had chances in the first set, had chances in the second set, but it was, I guess, just one of those matches where he was just really feeling his serve.

I think he served a really high percentage, he served really well, didn't hit many second serves at all in the match, didn't give me much to go off. I got those opportunities just based off my returning.

Yeah, I think he played much better than he did in Melbourne, to be honest. He's a good player, and his ranking doesn't really justify his level. I think he plays above his ranking. Yeah.

Q. The frustration that you would have been feeling through the match, can you explain that?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: No, there was no frustration. It was more just trying to find a solution to try and break him, to try and break his serve, because I knew the moment I would break him I would basically have control of the match.

I was holding my serve quite easily throughout the whole match except for the second-to-last game where he had one breakpoint and he capitalized on it.

Yeah, in that game, my first serve let me down. I didn't make a first serve in that game. That's what let me down.

There was no frustration honestly. Me and Rusty and the whole team were just trying to find a solution on how to break his serve. I did hit some mistakes on important points, and I think that's what let me down also.

Q. I'd like to know if there is a difference between the practice court and the court where you played today, and if it's slower and how do you find this court?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: I think I'm probably the worst person you can ask to try and find a difference on courts, because I don't really pay too much attention to it. I'm out there on the practice court, I'm practicing and I'm doing my stuff.

But for me, the courts are very, very slow. It may be not the courts but it's more the balls. I would say they get old really quickly and makes it hard to hit a winner or hit a passing. So to defend is really, there is a good way of playing on it.

But, yeah, I would say the court plays fine. It's bouncy. You can get a big kick on your serve off of it. It bounces off the court. If you hit it heavy, the ball bounces up, but I think just the tennis balls in general, they are quite slow.

Q. What about the atmosphere? You heard about the previous old Davis Cup, and of course today there were not many people. I mean, how do you react to that? Are you in a way disappointed or it's just normal you expect something like that? What would you like eventually to change if there was something to change?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: I think, yeah, obviously from my experience in Davis Cup, which is not a lot, I played one tie and the Aussie crowd there was unbelievable.

Obviously at the current state with COVID, not many Australians can fly out of Australia and come to Europe, so kind of expected it. The Aussie crowd that did come, the few supporters that we did have on our side, they were loud. I heard them throughout the whole match.

And I heard my team. Honestly my team were amazing. Every single person on the sideline were cheering me on,



helping me on, helping me fight. You know, I'm just extremely grateful for them just to have them on my side, because they really helped, the whole team.

Q. We could see on the bench, Lleyton was very animated, during the games and change of ends and things. A case of trying to find solutions today. How does he talk to you? Does he talk to you about tactics or...

ALEXEI POPYRIN: It's a bit of both, honestly. Lleyton, anything that Lleyton says, it has meaning to it. The guy's one of the greats.

Whenever he speaks, he's got a reason to speak, and he speaks the honest truth and he speaks something that, you know, you have to listen to it, because he probably all the time says something that's truly meaningful that can truly help you in the match.

He was motivational. And also tactically-wise we were trying to find a solution. We did see that his forehand was a bit weaker, so we tried to attack that side. He did a good job of countering that by hitting a forehand line straight to my backhand.

It was a very tactical match. Might have from the outside look like it wasn't because we were both serving big, but once we got to the rallies it was a very tactical match.

Q. You're saying about Lleyton talking to you during the match. What were some of the points that he was making to you on the change of ends?

ALEXEI POPYRIN: You know, we were trying to find a solution, how to neutralize his baseline game, how to get him into uncomfortable situations.

One of the things he said was to try to find a way to hit it high to his forehand, because we found out that that's something he didn't really like. On the serves, there is not much you can say when returning a guy's serve like that. The guy's serving 80% first serves in and serving at 220 kilometers an hour. Kind of hard to do something.

When you do have the chance, when you do get the return in, then you can look to neutralize a point, look to implement the tactics that we had set that we had found throughout the match.

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