

Davis Cup Finals

Thursday, 25 November 2021

Team Croatia

Marin Cilic

Press Conference

M. CILIC/A. de Minaur

6-1, 5-7, 6-4

Croatia - 2

Australia - 0

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. (No microphone.)

MARIN CILIC: I mean, there are still a lot of matches to play first of all. Tonight's match, doubles guys, then next match is Australia against Hungary. Then our match on Sunday against Hungary, we will see how things going to go.

We are very happy with our two wins today. For me was great first set and a half. I don't remember when I was playing this well for that long period. This is great path for me for going forward for next matches. If I can build up on this, build up on this form, it's going to be fantastic.

Obviously we were all expecting big fight from Alex because he's that kind of a player. He never gives up. He always finds a way to get back into the matches. He showed that today. Was also part of Davis Cup, the thrill, the drama. Always matches somehow get into a drama situation.

But extremely happy with the win.

Q. That was a roller coaster of a match. How did you get out of it with the fact that Alex had won four games in a row, was up 2-Love? What did you do to turn things around?

MARIN CILIC: Well, I basically stayed calm, wait for the storm to pass. I felt overall during those first two sets I played some great tennis.

He started to serve a bit better. I started to just miss few of the serves, made few unforced errors. Just overall it



wasn't that bad. Looking at the scoreboard, 5-7, 0-2, I felt there is still a lot to play. This kind of a court also gives you a chance to be in the rallies. It's not easy to win all the points with the serve. It's a bit slower. I felt I'm going to have a chance. Just stay calm and wait for it.

If he wins, he wins, but I'm going to give it my best.

Q. With all your Davis Cup experience, this is the first time you've been involved in this Finals format. Does it feel any different in this round-robin, best-of-three, every set counts?

MARIN CILIC: What is exactly the same is this team atmosphere, the buildup for the matches. Practice during the week, team behind you, everything. I enjoyed this part so much during my career. It was always something really beneficial for me that was enabling me to play even better than my form was showing in that moment.

Obviously it would have been better if there is bigger crowd and everything. We had incredible matches during the years at some home ties, some away ties. But I think the crowd was also into it. Even though it was a bit smaller group of Croatian fans, Australian fans, still you could feel that excitement, which was fantastic.

Q. Do you expect some more Croatians coming in case you have to play, even if there is a COVID problem? Between Italy and United States, if you have to give 51% to one of the two teams, who do you give it to and why?

MARIN CILIC: Yeah, we hope that more fans are going to come for Sunday's match against Hungary. Hopefully if we first in the group, playing quarterfinals here, that they stay also tomorrow's match. Hopefully we are trying to bring them and attract them as much as we can.

In terms of the Italy-U.S. and Colombia group, very interesting. Absolutely Italian team missing Matteo, still one of the best teams in the Davis Cup in general with all the guys that are playing. U.S. team always extremely strong, especially indoors with Isner, Opelka. Even Rajeev Ram had incredible season in doubles. Jack Sock is a great doubles guys, one of the best there is.

It's going to be really interesting. I would give a slight,



slight advantage maybe for Team Italy playing at home, also having a great team. We'll see. It's going to be entertaining.

Q. Regarding the format, Croatia won it under the old format, do you prefer this? Do you prefer the way it is now or the older format?

MARIN CILIC: I think both formats have their own pluses and obviously some minuses. But in terms of the competition and everything I feel this one is more beneficial for everyone, also for the players. This kind of a tournament Finals is exciting to be here, you know, playing.

We are playing today, then Italy-U.S., this group playing tomorrow, then you are watching on TV also the teams from Innsbruck and from Madrid. It's very entertaining in that part.

Being first time here, I still feel this good excitement which is always a part of Davis Cup. If you ask me if we would love to play in Croatia, we would love to, to have these kind of matches at home. I believe it would be sensational, playing two ties at home, or even for Team Italy possibility to play even three, it's incredible, fantastic. For the people just to see all of their players, also all the other ones, is incredible first experience. Also it's a boost for tennis in general.

Q. Did you hear the Davis Cup could go to Abu Dhabi for five years? News that came out last night. What do you think about it?

MARIN CILIC: I don't know. I haven't heard. I haven't heard for the news. It's difficult to relate. Obviously for us being Croatian, it's better if the ties are closer to Croatia so we can have more fans.

If it goes to Abu Dhabi, it goes. It's a decision from the Davis Cup Committee and organization. Definitely they're looking for the best things.

Overall in the whole understanding I think it's necessary to think about putting the fans and also this excitement which is the most vital part of the Davis Cup.

Q. Borna's performance, and with yourself being a tall player, the conditions here, are they suited to the bigger guys?

MARIN CILIC: Yeah, I mean, we were not expecting Borna to win today's match. What a great effort for him. He won a match in Davis Cup against India last year, his first ever, also tough battle that he had, now beating Popyrin on an extremely vital match for our group. It could

prove to be one of the most significant matches in the group that we going to be playing. Fantastic performance by him.

Obviously he serves incredibly well, close to 75% when he bombs. Just was great to watch. But even though I have to say it was tough battle, he had more chances in terms of general with the match. But things go like this.

Borna is that kind of a player. He serves big. He can win these kind of matches. In terms of conditions, it's a balance. I think here conditions of the court is quite slow. Once you get into the rally, it's not easy to hit a clean winner.

If you play Isner or Opelka, if they hit 30 aces, there is not much you can do. But I think in terms of playing styles, it's going to suit guys that play well from the baseline.

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