

Davis Cup Finals

Saturday, 27 November 2021

Team Great Britain

Leon Smith

Joe Salisbury

Neal Skupski

Press Conference

MAHUT-RINDERKNECH/Salisbury-Skupski

6-1, 6-4

Great Britain - 2

France - 1

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Joe, your first experience in Davis Cup obviously. How did you find it? How has it been today? Roller coaster of emotions, I imagine.

JOE SALISBURY: Yeah, I mean, it's been a good day. Obviously the team got the win, so that's great. It was a lot of fun leading up to it. Today obviously enjoyed supporting on the sidelines, yeah, watching the boys get the job done in singles.

Yeah, obviously disappointed how our match went. But, yeah, I mean, it's about the team, so we're happy that we got the win overall.

Yeah, we'll go again tomorrow.

Q. I always think it must be very different, quite exhausting, you did a lot of shouting on the sidelines. Feels like a lot of emotional energy to expend before a match. Is there any of that at all?

JOE SALISBURY: Don't think so. I mean, obviously it does expend some energy when you are on the sideline supporting. I think that's, for me, part of the experience. I want to be there on the side to support the rest of the team.

I think, yeah, I mean, that wasn't a factor at all in our doubles match. I think, if anything, it can kind of -- you feel a bit more tired at the end of the day. It's a bit more going on throughout. I think it could almost give you some



energy as well because you're getting so into it on the sidelines, you're getting fired up, supporting the guys. I think it can give you some energy as well.

I think, yeah, obviously you need to find a balance. For me, it's a good thing to be doing.

Q. Leon, how impressed were you? Dan and Cam played a huge amount, 75th match of the year for Cam. How pleased were you that they came out and brought so much energy?

LEON SMITH: Yeah, obviously with Evo starting off against Mannarino, it was a difficult match. I think that's their fourth time they've played. Most of the time it's been a bit of a battle, hasn't it, if you look back on their matches. It was a tough match.

Talk about Evo first. His mentality was really good. He was up in the first, lost his serve, bounced back straightaway. He stayed on it, got a good balance on his play from being offensive, using his slice well, which is good against Mannarino. He played a really good match. I think the most important thing is mentally he was really, really good throughout the whole course of the match.

Cam against Rinderknech, it was a tough match. Rinderknech, as he did in the doubles, was just serving huge. Cam in that second-set breaker, it shows you -- you talk about the number of matches he played, that's where it really comes into his element because he needed to come up with a couple of split-second decisions on passing shots, then you need to execute them.

That's what he managed to do. He's come such a long way. He's in such confidence. In those clutch moments he was able to come up with it. I was really impressed with him.

The doubles, as Joe just said, it's important to win the tie. It sets up with a good challenge but a good opportunity tomorrow. The doubles, the French pair played really, really well. It's one of those things, everyone says you got nothing to lose, and they were swinging away. They did swing away. They played great.

I know Joe and Neal are unbelievable players, two of the world's best doubles players. We'll be all set for tomorrow.

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Q. Leon, how are you going to juggle Cameron and Dan going forward? They played a lot of tennis this year. They are crucial to your path to glory.

LEON SMITH: I certainly won't be juggling the singles. That's it. We've got loads of faith in the doubles, like I just said.

I don't think Joe and Neal are coming in for the singles at this stage. No, honestly, our team's very settled. I think the guys would admit, as well, Liam did a great job supporting the guys today, and in practice all week, we've asked him in any session, be it singles or doubles, he steps up and does it. Should he need to play, he's going to be ready.

He's playing damn well. Our team is set with the doubles and singles pairings. We just got to make sure that we give the guys as much as they need. That's why you got a medical staff here. That's why the recovery has already started.

It's nice to have a day's grace in between the matches. We will have that luxury over this weekend. We have to get stuff right over the next six hours, less than that, before they go to bed.

Q. You're pretty confident your team can cope with the physical exertion?

LEON SMITH: Yeah. We're going to have to. We're going to have to. But, yeah, I mean, the number of matches that Cam has played, he's fit as a fiddle. That's why it was really important the week leading into this, off the back of all of them, through the year that they've had, it's really important that we spent this week not trying to cram the work in. It was about reducing the loads, reducing the volume, keeping it very short, keeping it fresh, focusing a lot on treatment through the whole week. That's an important side of it.

Q. Leon, your thoughts on the match tomorrow? On paper they're not as strong as with the French, but were pretty impressive on Thursday.

LEON SMITH: They'll be a difficult team. Indoor tennis is like that, as well. Czechs, they got a very good record in Davis Cup over the years. They're really experienced. Got a really experienced captain, coaching team. Vesely is obviously the more experienced of the team.

Actually that group that they've got, the group that sits underneath them, they can flex around in their team as well. I think they're all pretty young, 19, 20, 21 maybe.

They're all sitting inside about 130 in the rankings, moving in the right direction. I think they're really good players.

We saw all of the matches were difficult against France. We shouldn't expect anything different. I think it will be a very difficult tie. They've had a day's rest, as well. That's a benefit. So just going to push hard tomorrow.

Q. Leon, do you think a key benefit of finishing top of the group is that you play your quarterfinal in Innsbruck as well? The organizers have made efforts to make sure the conditions are similar, but no matter how much they try, there are going to be differences in Madrid.

LEON SMITH: Yeah, I mean, it would be of benefit I guess to obviously stay through here. You're not having to catch flights and change again. Just the rigmarole of packing the stuff in the room, going again to somewhere else, et cetera. It does give you a flow.

I'm not even looking that far ahead actually. We just got to focus on tomorrow. But should we get through, I'm sure the guys would say I don't really care where we play as long as we progress. That's the main thing.

We have it in our hands tomorrow to win the tie tomorrow and top the group. That's all we got to do. We'll see where that takes us. The match going on now is going to be tough as well, Serbia and Germany, the other part of this group as well. Pretty tough teams.

Q. Neal, how annoyed are you that the guys couldn't get the singles done in time for you to watch the first half of the Liverpool game?

NEAL SKUPSKI: I haven't even thought of the local game all day. I was pretty focused on our tie. I probably should have watched that a little bit from our doubles match today.

I mean, it's great that we won today, 2-1 against a good French team. We go again tomorrow against another tough team in the Czech Republic. They've been good in the past in Davis Cup.

I think we've got a good group of guys, good squad. We'll hopefully be fresh tomorrow to give one last push before hopefully making it through.

Q. Having Liam in the camp, you pay a bit of tribute of what he was doing? Good ball boy skills on Twitter.

NEAL SKUPSKI: Liam has been great. He flew in from, where was it from, Helsinki. He's had a great season, career high. Won a few challengers, won a challenger this

year. He's had a great season. Pushing to try to make main draw of Grand Slams these days.

But he's been great in the team room. At the start of the week I was playing doubles with because Joe was in Turin playing the finals. Liam has great energy. Even on the side today he was one of the loudest. He's practicing now just in case he gets called up. He'll be ready to go if that happens.

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