

# Davis Cup Finals

Sunday, 28 November 2021

Team Great Britain

Joe Salisbury

Cameron Norrie

Leon Smith

Neal Skupski

Press Conference

SALISBURY-SKUPSKI/Vesely-Machac

6-4, 6-2

Great Britain - 2

Czech Republic - 1

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Joe and Neal, wanted to ask you about that match, especially after yesterday, how good was it to come out and play like that under pressure?**

JOE SALISBURY: Yeah, obviously very, very satisfying, very happy to get the win. Was, yeah, very good sort of team performances I think over the last couple days. Obviously we were a bit disappointed with our performance yesterday.

But, yeah, I think we were confident we would come back stronger today. Obviously going into it, yeah, knowing that we had to get the win, I think we kind of embraced that situation. I think it brought the best out of us.

Yeah, very happy for the team that we're moving on.

**Q. Cam, dropping the second set, can you talk us through your emotions in that, how you dealt with that.**

CAMERON NORRIE: Yeah, I think I played a pretty flawless first set. I came out and I played a couple loose points, lost my serve, then he definitely raised his level, was very aggressive, hit his spots on the serve. I found myself down 3-0, double break pretty quickly. All credit to him.

Managed to play a tough first game in the third, get back to



long rallies, just finding my first serve when I needed to. I was really happy with the performance. The bench were incredible, a lot of energy. It was a great win.

**Q. Do you feel you've settled into the role of No. 1 player on this team now?**

CAMERON NORRIE: Yeah, I think it was obviously a big match, a must-win match for me, a must-win match for these boys here. I think it's all very new for all of us, but we've all had great years. We all prepared as well as we could for this event. We were all ready for today's challenge. All the preparation, all the hard work throughout the year paid off. We were able to step up in the big moments with a lot on the line for my match, these boys' match.

The way they came out with that energy was incredible. To ride it all the way through was very impressive. The whole team is proud of everyone. We couldn't be happier to be moving on. Still a lot of tennis to be played. We're looking forward to next week.

**Q. Joe, you've gathered a lot of experience in the last couple of years playing at the very highest level. Can you talk about what this weekend has taught you about the unique pressures of playing for the team in a prestigious competition? How have you found it?**

JOE SALISBURY: It's definitely different. I felt it yesterday. I think obviously going into the match today, I think it helped a lot having the experience even from the match yesterday because it is a very new thing playing for your country, first time playing Davis Cup. Especially in this environment, it's obviously different for everyone.

Yeah, it's strange having an empty stadium, but then a very loud bench which is great. You feel all the support from the rest of the team.

Yeah, I didn't play my best yesterday, but I think we learnt some stuff from that match and we came out today, yeah, knowing we had to win. I think that helped us, this fired us up, got us going, helped us produce a really good performance. Played a lot better than we did yesterday.

I think, yeah, being in the situation today, yeah, we embraced it. Really happy that we could play some good

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tennis and get the win.

**Q. Leon, the prime minister had a press conference yesterday to announce new lockdown measures in the UK. Seems like this new strain of COVID is going to limit things, less travel... How is that affecting your preparation? Has it made you more acutely aware of keeping the bubble quite tight on the road to a potential final?**

LEON SMITH: Obviously, it was quite fast moving, wasn't it, overnight, the information. We've been chatting a bit about it, this morning, because you're reading the news when you get up.

Yeah, obviously there's the normal concerns around it because everyone remembers what it was like 15, 16 months ago. The most important thing is that people stick to the course of getting vaccinated and get the boosters.

In terms of our own bubble, we are careful in terms of how we operate. I don't think we're high-fiving anyone. We're straight out with the hand gels and whatnot. We're pretty good at wearing masks and everything.

We have to find out the information about what that means travel-wise. That's pretty much out of our hands. I imagine it would be more testing procedures in place, which we obviously have here anyway, what we're doing. There's regular testing here. I'd imagine, whether we're going home or moving on to another venue if we managed to get further in the competition, it would be more testing here and when you get there.

Feels like we've gone a bit back in time. It could be introduced again, but we'll see what happens with that.

**Q. The fact you are spending so much time together probably doesn't matter because you get on with each other's company, like each other as well.**

LEON SMITH: I don't know what they say about everyone, but I can tell you I absolutely love the guys here. I mean, it's not just the players and myself. The support team are just absolutely brilliant. You couldn't ask for not just a nice bunch of people, but everyone goes the extra mile.

I won't name them, they'll get embarrassed, but they do everything for us. They do it with a smile on their face. Everyone feels part of it. We're in the team room in the evening. We're lucky we have different stuff to be doing, games. We spend time because we enjoy each other's company. It really is. It's been like that for a long time. Long may it continue.

It's such a good bunch of people to be around, I have to say.

**Q. Leon, you've been Davis Cup captain for a long time. This format has taken a bit of a battering in the last few days. Lleyton Hewitt obviously made known he's quite strongly against it. From your perspective sitting courtside, it's difficult, behind closed doors, maybe not fair comparison, but in general the format, how do you feel it works compared to the format of before? Do you prefer one or the other?**

LEON SMITH: In terms of the format two years ago or the old, old format?

**Q. Old, old format. Home and away.**

LEON SMITH: I think, look, we'll always -- I mean, we won it, so clearly we're going to have great memories of it. We also had years obviously following that and before it. We had great memories playing home and away ties because obviously it actually brings an atmosphere that's pretty unique to what the guys would experience normally, apart from when they get to play around our grass season, they obviously get more support. It's unique.

Everyone is going to say, me included, that we miss that. But then, you know, we can't do anything about what's happened here. That's no one's fault. What I can say is even two years ago we were playing in front of 12,000 fans in the semifinal, and it was a damn good atmosphere.

I obviously made some comments at the start. Without being armed with all the information of what might happen next, I'll go off on an tangent. It had to change around a little bit. I know what it's like for the players, how demanding life is on the road for them. In the old format, if you were successful, ended up being quite a lot of weeks. I remember making phone calls to players, not to persuade them so much, but you know you're giving up two weeks every time. That was tough for them. Something had to give.

Naturally when you change the competition, it was quite dramatic, now it's finding its feet, what may happen next. Definitely all the years to hear about what it is.

I think there's more info to come out which we need to hear about in terms of what it might look like. I said yesterday, till we get that, we can't really share an opinion.

I'll go back and say what I said before. Having experienced it behind closed doors with what happened today with these guys, we love it. We love playing for the country, love the support team. We'd love to have fans, of

course. Wherever it is, we'll work with ITF and Kosmos to make it work.

**Q. Leon, your thoughts on today really. We don't know yet who you're going to play, but it looks like it might be Germany.**

LEON SMITH: Yeah, we'll see how they go tonight. Look, it will be difficult, whether it's Germany or Serbia, whoever gets through. We're just delighted to get through. It's been a tough couple of days. The guys have stepped up to the plate brilliantly.

We'll wait and see who comes through basically. It's going to be a tough match. But we'll also be a tough match for them. That's the bottom line. We have a really good team. We've taken a lot from the last couple of days. We'll go in bouncing, good form, ready for that.

**Q. Leon, your thoughts on today as well?**

LEON SMITH: Damn good. Real good. It is what the guys said. I'm really, really proud of them. Doesn't matter who wins or losing rubbers, everyone is in it together, everyone is supporting at the end.

I thought ma Chakvetadze who played Evo in the first match, he played skin. He was great. Then Cam plays another young guy who played out of his skin. Cam is so great at finding a way through. Then he starts playing some great tennis. That's a testament because of who he is now as a player, the level he plays at. I'm really, really lucky to have him in the team.

Then you get the doubles guys who had a bit of a rough day yesterday, as Joe said. We had faith in them. They go about their business brilliantly. They prepared again. You always want to have a team of leaders. They stepped up. I thought they delivered just such a great performance.

**Q. Leon, could I ask what preparations look like between now and the quarterfinal?**

LEON SMITH: Yeah, we'll go back, spend a bit of time together as a team. They're all itching to do that right now. No, we'll practice tomorrow. It will be pretty light. There's been a lot of tennis played over the last two days because of back-to-back matches. It will be really light. Mostly around recovery. Change of time a little bit because we had two early starts, next match is going to be a 4:00 start. We'll change to those timings tomorrow. Really light. Keep everything in the tank for Tuesday.

**Q. You're staying in a hotel in the mountains. I saw photos this morning. Looks like it's quite snowy up**

**there. Was the journey down in the bus hairy at all? What is it like spending your time up there?**

NEAL SKUPSKI: Yeah, I mean, it's an amazing hotel we're staying in. I mean, it probably takes about 50 minutes to get down from the top to the bottom. I mean, it is pretty nerve-wracking coming down, especially on the ice.

But, yeah, I mean, it's something that we got to do. Obviously the drivers are experienced enough to come down. But, yeah, I mean, it's a brilliant hotel. All the facilities are there for what we need. There's a spa, great restaurants. Obviously we have a great team room where we go at night and play games. Everyone just bonds. The whole team and the staff have been great all week. I mean, they put their work in, and it's paying off.

It's a nice little hotel to stay in for a couple days and then hopefully we can move on. There's some good pictures on Instagram, that's true (smiling).

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