

Davis Cup Finals

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David Haggerty

Enric Rojas

Press Conference



we are going to see again the final day a real engagement into the arena.

That gives me the point, I can go to the point, remember in 2019 here in Madrid we were playing seven days and all the ties here. We faced especially a couple of challenges with the scheduling and the fan attendance in a few ties. We were working together with the ITF, well, for more than a year in 2020 how to improve and how to fix those challenges.

We decided to go to this multi-city, multi-venue exercise together with expansion of the competition to 11 days because we thought being able to play in the evenings, always with exception of the first weekend, and having the opportunity of having two other cities with home interest and home team playing there would avoid those problems or challenges we had in terms of scheduling and fan attendance.

I think the data and the facts I'm saying, and we all know, are telling us that that change, more than a change, the adjustment of the competition, was the right one to do.

So I think that together with the ITF we are constantly thinking of how to improve, adjust for the future and looking to the edition of 2022.

As you know, we are going from 18 teams to 16 teams. We are going to try again to do another adjustment, a bit of an evolution, for having four different cities hosting the group stage, and then going to a neutral city for playing the final part of the competition with the quarterfinals, semifinals and final.

We think that with that small adjustment and evolution we are going to have even more fan engagement and more people in the arenas because of having four cities with extra home interest. It's going to give us, in our view, the final piece of becoming a real successful event and the real World Cup of Tennis.

THE MODERATOR: David.

DAVID HAGGERTY: Thanks, Enric. Good afternoon, everyone.

The standard of tennis on the court these last 11 days has

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the 2021 wrap press conference. We have David Haggerty, ITF president, and Enric Rojas, CEO of Kosmos.

We will start with opening comments.

Enric.

ENRIC ROJAS: Good afternoon to everyone, for those of you that are here and for those that connected virtually.

We are the last day of the Davis Cup Finals. I have to say that we are really, really proud and happy about the performance of this edition, either sporting-wise or because of the attendance and the fan engagement we had.

You know that we have had reduced capacity here in Madrid and in Italy, and we had to play behind closed doors in Innsbruck. But even with that, those challenges due to COVID, we have been able to have more than 100,000 people in the two different arenas, which I think in the current environment we are, it's a really successful result.

I keep putting this example of today at 10 a.m. here in Madrid, more than 5,000 people watching Kazakhstan against Sweden. It's one very unique fact in my view that we have to be very, very proud and very happy as I said about this attendance and this fan engagement.

It's true that, for example, here in Madrid after Spain losing, not qualifying for the quarterfinals, we were a bit waiting for seeing how the fans and the people would react to that. But again, even after that loss here in Madrid and in Spain, we kept having the arena quite full.

We showed that this is a real World Cup of Tennis. Obviously having the best teams is what we are looking for, but also even not having the home interest, I mean, we had the arena almost full.

We are having this evening a great final. We are expecting a lot of fans coming from, for example, Croatia. I think that



been exceptional, with electrifying action and filled with lots of emotion. As Enric has said, the fan numbers have been impressive with millions of fans watching on television and in the stands and online.

New heroes emerged such as Borna Gojo. Wearing his country colors, he defeated three players that were ranked above him.

Davis Cup, after all, you know is about a team, team performance, playing for something greater than yourself, playing for your country.

The players we have spoken to enjoyed the experience of the new Finals and have said they look forward to future editions. As you have heard recent comments from Novak Djokovic, Rafa Nadal, Marin Cilic and Daniil Medvedev have shown that our vision for the competition is shared by the leading players.

Learnings from the 2019 Finals have been addressed. This five-city model that Enric has talked about with the four group stage cities, is a simple, understandable format that we see in many other world championships.

This format will provide the flexibility of schedules that are needed. It will reach more fans and secure the economic sustainability of the competition.

The ITF board have with Kosmos identified a preferred host city for the final knockout stage who will share our vision for the future of Davis Cup and will invest in creating a true World Cup of Tennis.

As you know, Davis Cup is the largest annual team competition in all of sport. The Finals are the pinnacle of a massive world championship. Sometimes we forget 141 nations entered the Davis Cup 2020 and 2021 edition, and 743 players were nominated to represent their country.

The vision we set out in 2018, and the nations approved in Orlando, was to create a true World Cup of Tennis. We can be proud of what we accomplished together with the first two editions.

The pandemic has hit everyone severely. The challenges faced by Kosmos and the ITF team to put on the event in 2021 have been considerable. But the team have met more of these challenges head on and have created a very memorable Davis Cup Finals.

A successful future for the Davis Cup means successful future for the next generations of players. These exciting plans for 2022 onwards have all the ingredients necessary for the legacy of Davis Cup and to provide financial, vital

financial resources to nations to develop grassroots participation ensuring more children and adults pick up a racquet and play tennis. That's really the mission of the ITF, to grow the game. Our target is to reach 120 million tennis players by 2030.

We also invest to make sure that more countries have the infrastructure and a pathway in place so that any young player, regardless of where they come from, that have talent and determination can continue to rise in tennis. We want to see if we can't create more Borna Gojos.

Thank you, everyone, for your time. We'd now be happy to open it up for any questions that you might have.

Q. I'd like to understand how many days there will be between the four, let's say, first selecting Davis Cup cities, and the final one, how many days? Is it probable that they will play indoor in the first four cities and outdoor in the fifth, which will be the final section?

ENRIC ROJAS: So, no, the structure and the gap between the group stage and the quarterfinals is going to be exactly the same that we have had this year. So the players in between group stage and the quarterfinals are going to have two days of rest and adapting to the neutral city.

We are planning to fly to the neutral city after the end of the tie, the last tie of the group stage, then arriving that night and having two days, as we did from Innsbruck and from Torino to Madrid, having always two days for adaptation, resting and adaptation.

The whole competition will need to be indoor. If there is one, two or three cities in Europe, needs to be indoor in November. That's why everybody is going to be indoor.

Q. Also the final will be indoor?

ENRIC ROJAS: Yes.

DAVID HAGGERTY: Correct.

Q. What about the spectators? Without knowing who is going to be in the final city, how to book the flights, the seats? How do you think you will fill up that area which we know that normally if it's Arab Emirates or whatever, Abu Dhabi, normally it's very difficult to fill up the stadiums? Is that a worry for you or it isn't?

ENRIC ROJAS: Well, I mean, the worry is not about specifically because of any location. It's our goal, as I said at my intro, to have all the arenas as full as possible. So it's not just about what's going to happen in between the

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group stage and the quarterfinals, semifinals and final. As we did during 2020 and this year, 2021, we have been working all year for having the fans in the arenas, as we have shown these days.

It's about working together with all the NAs, working together with the different embassies, working together with the different ex-pats that are living in the world, trying to engage with them, helping them to travel, even without their nation being classified.

What I mean by that is that this is the World Cup of Tennis. If we were to compare to the World Cup with any other sport, it's not just about when your team is playing, it's also about the competition.

I know that it's important for us to bring fans that they are going to be playing in the quarterfinals and the semifinals and the final for having a massive support. But it's not only about that.

Going back to the initial question, we are going to work very hard on that for filling the arena, for having the fan engagement. As I said, we are going to work with the different NAs, different suppliers, we are going to try to bundle all kind of hotels, flights and everything.

Today, for example, in six hours yesterday we managed to have a charter, a private plane, for having 150 people from Croatia just arriving today because they got the final day before yesterday.

We will have all our team working the full year for making sure that the fans are going to be able to go there and to have the environment we want to have in the arenas.

Q. Enric, I don't know if you said this at the beginning, but as far as the cities are concerned, Abu Dhabi has been the open discussion. Is that a definite final, the definite final city? As far as the other cities are concerned, when do you decide as to when they are going to be confirmed?

ENRIC ROJAS: So let me start by the second part of the question.

We are going to start, together with the ITF, a process the beginning January where we are going to ask all kind of cities, federations, promoters for some kind of expression of interest for them to host the four different group stage.

We will start the official bidding process by I think it's going to be the 15, early January, and they will have six weeks to present the proposal. Then after reviewing everything and even visiting arenas and having private conversations with

the different bidders, we are expecting to have the final decision of the four cities by mid March. So that's the first part.

Regarding your question on Abu Dhabi, we have been working at Kosmos, together with the ITF, since many months ago about where we would like our options of going for the neutral venue we need. There is a preferred option that we are negotiating. There is nothing signed yet, not to be announced. It's going to happen hopefully very soon. The announcement is going to happen within the next few weeks. But for the moment, it's just preferred option that we are discussing. There is not too much details to say on that.

Q. How did you make the choice for the two wild cards, Serbia and Great Britain?

ENRIC ROJAS: Look, first of all I have to say that we, with the ITF, received I don't know how many, a lot of requests for the wild cards. There was a lot of interest by many federations.

I must say, first of all, that it has been a really difficult decision. Obviously we all want the best teams in the Davis Cup Finals. Anytime that you have only two wild cards, it's a very difficult decision.

Let me go to the Serbian decision.

I think it's fair to say that for a wild card, having the No. 1 in the world in the competition, guaranteeing that his team is going to be there, it's a good thing to think about it and to decide.

I think you guys has been seeing his engagement with the new format, with the competition these days, in Innsbruck first, and then here. The passion of Serbia, the passion of the No. 1 in the world, Novak Djokovic, as well.

I think that decision, the arguments on that decision for guaranteeing us of having -- maybe next year he is not going to be the No. 1 in the world, but he is now the No. 1 in the world.

In terms of the second one, there are many options on the table. When you want to use a wild card, you need to use it for, first of all, having the best teams. Probably you need to choose one team that has a bit of a threat of not being qualified.

You put in a balance that if you have three options, who has more chances to be qualified in a qualifier. Then as you want to have the best teams, we went for GB.



Obviously when you put things on a balance, it's about opinions. I'm sure that you or others can have other opinions. At the end you have to take a decision. It's a shame, but we only have two wild cards.

DAVID HAGGERTY: To add to Enric's comments. I can tell you there were many teams that were deserving and it was a very difficult decision to make in the end.

We're very happy with the teams that have been chosen.

Q. What is the preferred Finals venue? What makes that venue city the preferred option?

DAVID HAGGERTY: Let me start, then Enric can add.

I think we have a preferred city that has a vision that we have, that we share together, for Davis Cup, continuing to build on that competition. That's one of the main ingredients. We'll be leaving behind a legacy in all four cities that have the group stage as well as the preferred city that will have the Finals.

There are many outstanding reasons that we believe this preferred host is where we will go. In due course, we'll make an announcement.

ENRIC ROJAS: Well, I think I don't have anything to add, to be honest. It's exactly what Dave said.

Q. I wanted to clarify. On Monday journalists received an email that was titled 'Next Destination' and it said the ITF and Kosmos were pleased to invite you to the official announcement of the next host city. You're sitting here today and you can't tell us who that host city is. Why is that? That would seem on the outside there is some opposition to the preferred host and the stuff you need to work through.

DAVID HAGGERTY: I can tell you that we are in final negotiations. We haven't signed so we didn't think it was proper to make an announcement. There is no opposition that we're aware of. We're very pleased with the preferred city that we're in final stages with.

Q. David, can you explain to me why you put China in the draw for the Davis Cup and the Billie Jean King Cup following the lack of communication the WTA have had with Peng Shuai and the country? Will you consider suspending the Chinese Tennis Association until the WTA have confirmed information that she is safe?

DAVID HAGGERTY: First of all, the ITF issued a statement. Let me remind everyone what that was about

Peng Shuai and the situation.

As the governing body of tennis, it's very important that we support all of the women's rights. We are concerned about Peng's well-being. At the same time you have to remember that we are the international governing body. Our mission is to make sure that tennis is played around the world safely. We're responsible for grassroots and the next generation of players, so we want tennis to continue to be played.

I can assure you, we will continue to monitor the situation. If there is a time or a reason that we believe tennis might not be played there, that is not the decision the board has come to. That's why they are in the draw, as they should be. They might have been drawn away. You don't know. We're certainly not saying Chinese tennis players cannot play tennis in other countries.

Q. On the four group hosts, will there be definitely a home country in each of those groups or not? Will there be consideration, like this year, the three hosts were all altitude? Will there be anything like that where you want the conditions to be similar?

ENRIC ROJAS: I didn't hear well the second part of the question.

The first one is that, yes, the four cities, it's going to be mandatory for us to have the home country playing there. That's why the process we are going to do and the bidding process we are going to do, as I'm sure we already got it, but I'm sure there will be a lot of interest.

We will need to choose four cities, but we will need to have a few cities as a backup in case of one of the nations not being classified.

I mean, you know that the previous process we had Madrid with altitude, so this time, yes, all of them are going to have the same altitude or very similar altitude.

We are going to have the same conditions in the four group cities of the group stage as well as in the neutral city for the final part of the competition.

DAVID HAGGERTY: To add one thing. We see over a number of years that all different countries will be able to have an opportunity perhaps to host. That's the great thing about this format.

Q. Going back to the issue of the host cities. Do you expect that these cities would be on a one-year deal? Would they be on an extended, multi-year deal? To get back to the final city, did you say it was going to be

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semis and final or quarters, semis and finals in that city? Obviously we've spoken a lot about or mentioned Abu Dhabi. There hasn't been initially much positive thought or feeling about Abu Dhabi. Is that something that would sway any decision?

ENRIC ROJAS: Look, I start by saying that the neutral city is going to be quarterfinals, semifinals and final.

Again, in terms of the neutral city we are as a preferred option discussing, these days we have been talking to many different stakeholders and players, captains, et cetera, and not about where we are going to go, where we are discussing to go. It's more about the format, what we have changed.

They have seen what we have been able to do here, Innsbruck and Torino. We have had a really positive feedback from all of them. I mean, we cannot avoid some noise around everything we do. We have faced that since 2018 and in 2019, now in 2021, especially coming from a few countries.

I have the feeling after speaking to many players and captains and federations that the noise that we are hearing is because of Abu Dhabi or because other things, that that noise will happen always irrespective of whatever you do.

So, yeah, there will be some flexibility in the process, but we are looking for having agreements with the host cities and the countries in between three and five years.

As I said previously, it can happen that you have an agreement with a city or a country, then the home country or team is not classified. That's why we need to have multi-agreements, plus backup options, for fixing that possibility of not being classified.

Q. I would like to know how important is for you to have the media, written media, present, also radios, at the event, the final event? You mentioned the fact that from Europe you will have two days maybe to go to Abu Dhabi, or not many days, won't be very easy. One thing is from Croatia to bring 150 people in one day to Madrid. Another thing is to fly for seven hours and go to Abu Dhabi. That is for the media and of course it's also for the players, if they stay seven hours in the plane and have one day to practice, will not be very easy. How do you think you will face this problem? Here we were not too many to follow this final event on-site. Madrid is in Europe. Some people from Turin, if Italy would have qualified, they would have come here. They didn't because Italy didn't qualify. If we have to go to Abu Dhabi it's a different story in terms of cost, hotel, flights. Those are maybe minor

problems but they are problems.

DAVID HAGGERTY: I'll start with that. I wasn't sure if it was a statement or a question. Let me try to answer the parts that were questions.

The media is very, very important. We're so happy that you are here. We wish that more that are virtual could be here with us. But we understand the conditions that we face this year and the challenges of COVID that we have.

I think those that are here have really been able to see Davis Cup at its finest, to see the emotion, the players, the fans, the spectators, everything coming together in the way that we always envisioned Davis Cup, the World Cup of Tennis, to be.

The same way we're going to work with the nations to get fans to the four group stages and the Finals, wherever that will be, we'll want to do the same thing to make sure that we have the media coverage as well. You're very important to ITF and Kosmos. We will certainly work.

Because we think this is a great format, we think it's just going to continue to get better and better. So we really look forward to 2022.

But we do hope that not only will you be here but more of your media colleagues will also travel.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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