

Davis Cup Finals

Wednesday, 23 November 2022

Team USA

Captain Mardy Fish

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We have the Team USA captain for prematch availability. Questions, please.

Q. First of all, I want to know, before asking you about Italy, how did your life has changed since you're the USA captain? How did your players to manage these situations before a very huge game representing your national team?

CAPTAIN FISH: Yeah, thank you for the question. It's truly an honor to be a Davis Cup captain. I have enjoyed the process. This is the best team that I have had in my four-or-so years, just in terms of wanting to be here, wanting to play with each other, wanting to compete with each other.

So getting them excited about the competition is very easy. It has been difficult in the past. Is very easy this time. So that, I'm excited about.

Yeah, it's nice to be here in Spain again. I have played Davis Cup final in 2004. Played here in Madrid in 2008. I was actually a practice partner on our team in 2000 in Santander. So played a few Davis Cup ties. And then 2019 Madrid, as well, Davis Cup finals.

So spent a lot of Davis Cup time here in this great country. We're excited to get going and to play a familiar team tomorrow that we have played quite a lot in the past few years. Played last year. Played 2019 as well. Obviously one of the best countries in the world. I feel like we are as well. So it should be a fun one.

Q. You were just saying about the team and the boys the way they're getting together. Do you feel that this is the most cohesive American team since you, James, Andy, Bob and Mike and all that were together in a team?

CAPTAIN FISH: Yeah. Without question, it is. From the moment that we decided on the roster, they have been incredibly excited. It's hard. You know, we have a lot of great players now. We've got a lot of great doubles players, a lot of great singles players. So kind of finding



that correct fit has been difficult in the past. Can't just strictly go by rankings. Can't beg people to play.

I have learned a lot as a captain as to how to put a roster together and how to put a team together. It's not just the players. The support staff, all the way from help getting here, all the way to the players themselves and myself, all of that has been a process. We feel like it's complete. We're ready to really do something great.

Q. Rajeev Ram said after the ATP Finals that he was disappointed not to be on the team. He felt like he had earned his spot and that he was surprised that you had only gone with four players rather than five. Wondering what your reaction to that is? Can you explain the sort of process behind that decision?

CAPTAIN FISH: Sure, of course. Rajeev and I are great friends. We had multiple conversations as well. He expressed that same sentiment to me. I saw the quotes in Turin. They were the exact same thing that he told me, you know, on the phone or face to face as well.

I love Rajeev. Rajeev has been a phenomenal player for us. This is a different roster this specific time. We have Davis Cup next year. I told him that he is still very much in my plans for future ties and beyond. Obviously we play every year.

I have been the only captain, I will say, the only captain to call him and to be a part of the team. So I think that speaks volumes in terms of what I think of him as a player.

The doubles, speaking specifically about the doubles, I think the world of him in terms of his game. Obviously he's one of the best players in the world. But matching, putting a team together isn't as simple as just taking a player that's ranked high and put him with another player and just hope that they do well.

They have had success. They have won some matches; they have lost some matches. I think they are a good team together. But this tie or this competition, quarterfinals and on, we're going to go with a different team.

The tough part about the job is trying to mesh that together, and that's the hardest part is having that conversation with someone like Rajeev, a friend, someone

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that I competed against, and I think the world of in terms of his game and him as a teammate. He's been phenomenal.

I told him that this is just this tie and that I don't want to lose him in terms of him not wanting to be a part of the team or the process. Again, I'm the only captain that's actually given him a shot as well, and he's said yes every time and he's been great. We miss him here. I'm sure he'll be in obvious consideration for the next tie that we have, whenever that is.

Q. Can I just ask what's different about this tie compared to the group stage and the qualifiers when he was involved?

CAPTAIN FISH: In what context? Like what's different...

Q. For him not to be picked.

CAPTAIN FISH: I want to put a different doubles team on the court, period.

Q. Any concern about Taylor coming in a little bit late, having just gotten here yesterday or the day before, or the fact he had some heavy-duty matches in Turin makes it a situation where it's not that big a deal?

CAPTAIN FISH: Zero concern. Only concern -- well, I say zero, and then I'm going to give you a concern. The only concern is just getting used to the balls and the surface. These guys are the pros and they do this every week in, week out.

You play three tournaments in a row and you're going to have three separate surface speeds. You may have two separate balls, different types of balls to try and get used to.

A lot of times if you do well the week before you only have a day or so. He's had three days to get ready. He hasn't hit on center yet, but we will tomorrow. I think it's a little bit quicker than it is on the practice courts, it seemed. We have only been out there once. Obviously there's matches going on, so it's been difficult to get practice time on the center court.

That's the only thing is just kind of getting him out there, seeing that court, and then kind of just getting used to the speed and everything because it's a little bit different.

In terms of how he's playing, obviously one of the best players in the world right now. He could have easily won last week. He's made some serious strides. I know Taylor from traveling with him in 2017 and 2018 and spending a lot of time with him out in California, and so we know each

other very well. I know his game very well.

So, yeah, you know, this is my first time I have had a top-10 player in a singles match, which is really nice to kind of throw someone out there and someone that's really confident, playing really well. Sort of like Rajeev last year played, it was in Turin, played with Jack and came in with a lot of confidence.

Yeah, so it's great to have them. Obviously Frances and Tommy as well. Pretty similar players in terms of their games and stuff. You know, Frances having that great run in the US Open I think shows those guys that they can win something big like that. He was really close. And Taylor was really close in winning last week.

So as a captain, that makes me very excited. Makes my job a lot easier.

Q. How do you rate Italy chances since Berrettini, Jannik are not playing, if you think that Italian team lost quality without Matteo and Jannik? Would you be honestly surprised to see Fognini playing singles tomorrow?

CAPTAIN FISH: I'd be surprised if Fabio played singles. To say that they are an equal team without Berrettini and Sinner would probably not be the case. That doesn't mean that Musetti and Sonigo can't -- Sonigo played last year when we played them in Turin. He was awesome. He beat Opelka. That was in front of their fans, the home court. It's nice and fun to get that type of atmosphere back in Davis Cup.

Yeah, I mean, Fritz wasn't able to come last year as well. He had COVID. Got COVID literally the day before we were supposed to leave. So we didn't have our No. 1 player last year to play them. You know, it was a bit unlucky for us, and obviously unlucky for them in terms of injuries and stuff.

I mean, it's the end of the year. We are really lucky right now, knock on wood. They are really healthy on our team. Everyone feels great. No nicks or anything.

So we are in a really good spot. We are playing a familiar team that again we played in the past, past few years a couple times.

They're, you know, a top sort of 3 or 4 team in the world, country in the world. They're really tough. They have great singles and great doubles. So it will be fun.

Q. I'd like to connect with the other question about Taylor, just to be sure. So we can say we are pretty



confident that Taylor will be on court tomorrow? After such a grueling season, what are the condition? He's 80% or 90%? And also Frances, he didn't play since Bercy. What are his physical condition? Did he train or did he have vacation?

CAPTAIN FISH: Yeah, the guys that weren't in Turin, which is all three of them outside of Taylor, are all happy, healthy, fit, ready to go. They have put in a lot of time. Took some time off after Bercy and then got right back at it. They were practicing, getting ready over there and here obviously.

What was the first part? Fritz? Taylor? Yeah, I mean, Taylor, I'd say he's 100%. He's a very unique kid. He's been on the road for a long time. He's been on the road since I think Valencia that they have been playing or so. So he's been on the road for six, seven weeks or so. Came here without question.

A lot of times you can get a call from someone who plays deep into a year and, you know, I mean, for us, we play tomorrow and that's Thanksgiving for us. It's a big holiday for us at home, and not being there and missing our families is a big deal for us.

To have those guys commit and want to be here and want to be a part of the process and the team and try and win this thing for the first time since 2007 means a lot to me and means a lot to the rest of the guys on the team, each other individually that they're committed to trying to win this thing.

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