

Davis Cup Finals

Monday, 20 November 2023

Team Czechia

Captain Jaroslav Navratil

Jakub Mensik

Jiri Lahecka

Tomas Machac

Adam Pavlasek

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Hello, everyone. We will start with English questions, and after we will change into national language. English, please.

Q. A question for Jiri. Obviously a very young team with bright future for Czech tennis. Could you tell us your recollections about Davis Cup, whether you were watching or you attended maybe sometimes? What do you feel makes it special, this competition, for you?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, so as you said, this team is very young. Of course we have one senior, Adam (smiling). But, you know, the experience is always needed in the team.

No, I'm just joking. Yeah, the team is -- I mean, Adam as a doubles player is very young still. I mean, he's in his best age, I would say.

For the rest of us, as you said, we are very young so we are very hungry. We are trying to do our best, trying to compete and getting better for the Davis Cup ties.

Davis Cup for all of us is a big priority. We are trying to play as much as we could to prepare well. We did this in Valencia. We played well. And of course all of us, we are very happy to be here. Spain, nice country, feeling good, good surface, good conditions. We are really looking forward to this competition, yeah.

Q. Jiri, can you talk about your personal evolution in this competition? I think you lost your first three singles matches, but you have won I think seven in a row. Have you just got just more comfortable playing this competition and having the crowd, having the team? Can you just talk about sort of your comfort



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level, I suppose, and how it's evolved?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, so my beginnings in the Davis Cup team, it wasn't easy, because obviously I was in very young age. I got the first chances from the captain, for which I'm very happy and very grateful, when I was only 17. I played Robin Haase back in Ostrava in 2019.

So first couple of matches were very tough for me. I was always playing against better players with high ranking, so I think that that was some kind of a process where I needed to go through these moments to learn, to get used to the pressure, to get used to the competition format.

Then when we started to play against teams where the ranking of our opponents wasn't that much better than ours, then I started to feel more comfort building. I started to feel more confidence in my own game, and that's where the confidence for the rest of the year started.

All of us, we showed that in Valencia that we can play. If all of us can put hands to the team success, then we can make great things.

Q. Jiri, does it feel different this year, though, given the progress that you have made, especially in Australia? And is hard court your preferred surface?

JIRI LEHECKA: Yeah, so hard court is my preferred surface, yeah. I feel good on it. I feel confident on it. I feel that my game fits it well.

Of course when I spoke last time about our progress as a team in the Davis Cup competition, one half year ago, one year ago when we played for being in the quallies against Israel, even for being in the quallies, if someone told us that we would make this kind of progress in one year, we wouldn't believe it, but it just shows how everyone in our team, all the people around us and us as the players, we made some progress on a personal level. We improved in almost every aspect of the game.

Jakub, he went from not even being ranked player quickly in top 200. Tomas, he broke into 100 right now. Again, he made great progress on the Challenger Tour. Adam, he

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showed his experience and he's playing incredible doubles game.

Also, for me, I gained some experience through the year, as you said, in Australia, then some very good matches in Wimbledon, playing final in Winston-Salem. These are, like, small details and small things which made our team much more stronger. As we improved, everyone by itself, then we can work as a team much better.

Q. Jakub, did you expect all the success you have had in the last months? How are you processing those weeks?

JAKUB MENSİK: Yeah, I mean, this year for me was really difficult, because I started to play more pro-level tournaments. Last year I was still junior, and for this year when I started to play, you know, the Challenger Tour and every kind of these tournaments, also my debut in Davis Cup, and also my first time, first experience on the men's Grand Slam. So these experiences was very good for me. I think that this year was very good for me and for my game and also for my improvement.

So I just want to say that I'm super happy to be the part of the Davis Cup team again, and, you know, helped me and my team to show the good game and good result here in Malaga.

Q. Also a question for Jakub. As you mentioned, you have had a lot of progress this year. This is a team environment, team group. I was wondering if you recall if any piece of advice maybe from Jiri or from Tomas who have had so many experience now up to this point in the ATP circuit, has any piece of advice like resonated in your head, that you keep some of them, could you tell us?

JAKUB MENSİK: Yeah, of course I'm just the newcomer. Jiri and also Tomas and Adam are in the Davis Cup for a long time. So for me is the first year.

You know, I'm getting used to it and all the experiences what they have and what they have in the Davis Cup. I'm getting the best of it. Yeah, I will do my best to go by their steps for in other years.

Q. As you continue to rise, what is the biggest difference, would you say, between, say, for example, the Challenger Tour and then playing Taylor Fritz in the third round, I think it was? What's the biggest difference between those?

JAKUB MENSİK: Yeah, I mean, the level when you're 50 and higher -- I mean, when you are in the top 100 and top

300, I think the level is pretty same, you know. Just when you're playing against these guys when they are top 50, you can see the differences, you know, in the pressure, pressure situation, when you're on the courts. Also, you know, the experience, it was my first game on this big stadium with Taylor, so I didn't feel very comfortable.

But these experiences are helping me a lot. Also, when you're playing against these guys, which they are playing, you know, this type of the tournaments, yeah, it's very different.

Like I said, when I started this year with the Challenger Tour and I had the opportunity to play a Grand Slam and qualify, so yeah, just biggest experience, and that's all, yeah.

Q. Tomas, obviously a couple of titles recently on the Challenger Tour. Just wondering how would you sort of assess your year as a whole and how much more is there to come, do you think?

TOMAS MACHAC: Yes. The end of the year was for me very good. I'm super happy with my performance on the Challenger Tour.

Also, I had a little bit lucky that I can go as a seeded in Stockholm, that I had a chance as a lucky loser, played against Stan Wawrinka. I managed to win that match. The level of my tennis was pretty high, so I like my, let's say, tennis on the court I pretty like now. Yeah.

Q. Question for Adam. Obviously you have been part of the, let's say, golden generation of Czech tennis for the last years with Tomas Berdych, with Radek Stepanek. Now you're kind of the leader of this young crop of players. Do you feel like you're kind of the bridge between the golden generation of Czech tennis and what might become the next golden generation of Czech tennis?

ADAM PAVLASEK: Well, in the first golden generation, I wasn't there. I started to play the Davis Cup after the era of Tomas and Radek. For me it's like still for me like a new era.

Yes, I'm now kind of a teacher. I'm eight years older than, for example, Jakub and Jiri. I'm kind of a teacher. As Jiri said, I have a lot of experiences. So I'd like to teach them or try to tell them something, so for me I couldn't do some differences between the era. Now it's a new era, a new generation, and I would like to try to be the part of the new generation.

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