

Davis Cup Finals

Wednesday, 22 November 2023

Team Serbia

Captain Viktor Troicki

Hamad Medjedovic

Miomir Kecmanovic

Novak Djokovic

Laslo Djere

Dusan Lajovic

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody. Welcome, Team Serbia. We will start with questions in English.

Q. Novak, your first time in Davis Cup was in 2004. What do you remember about the date?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: I remember we played in Belgrade. It was in the second Euro/African Group, zone, whatever it was called at the time. Obviously a huge honor. I was very young. I got an invite from the captain to be part of the team.

So Davis Cup has been historically the most important team competition for nations in tennis. You know, over a hundred years old. It is the most important one to win for any tennis nation in the world.

So hopefully, yeah, almost 20 years later, we can have a chance at the title.

Q. Novak, just briefly give us an idea what happened after the shouting died down and the screaming and the excitement after Torino. What did you do after that? And Viktor, how much more confidence does it give the team you've got Novak in there this year?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I came the next day, so, you know, I didn't really have much time to celebrate, although it was very nice to have my children who are with me now, as well, and family. I got a day and a half of rest and I started training right away, because obviously there is not much time to really, I guess, leave the racquet aside.

It's the last week of the season, so, you know, one final



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push is necessary from each one of us, and I'm excited because I have been playing some really good tennis, particularly in the last four months of the season.

I couldn't be happier with the way I performed in the semifinals and finals of Torino, so hopefully I'm carrying this kind of, yeah, basically energy and performance level to the Davis Cup.

Yeah, I'm with the team. I'm grateful to be once again in the national team. As I said many months ago, actually the beginning of the season, that Davis Cup, you know, has been and is one of my greatest goals of this season and always is. Yeah, basically hopefully I will be able to contribute to win.

CAPTAIN VIKTOR TROICKI: Well, definitely we are thankful to Novak that he's here with us. He was in Valencia and of course here in Malaga. But not just now. I mean, over the years, as we said, 20 years that he's playing in the Davis Cup team, he always -- I think he's the guy that played so many years. I mean, we can count only maybe just few times that he actually didn't play.

So, yeah, you can see that, as he said, that's his goal for the season, to help Serbia win another title. We are all here to give our best and to compete and to try to go for another title.

Obviously with Novak as a leader, it's very helpful and we are very grateful to have him. Yeah, that's it (smiling).

Q. Novak, just your thoughts on tomorrow's tie. What do you think are the strengths of the British team?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I mean, Great Britain is one of the greatest tennis nations out there. Of course you have one of the strongest tennis federations, Wimbledon, you know, much success on both male and female side over the years.

Of course recently with Andy and Jamie Murray and of course Norrie, Draper who are going to play most likely tomorrow, both lefties. You know, I haven't faced a lefty in a while. I don't think any of us has played too many

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left-handed players lately. It was not easy to find a left-handed sparring partner, but we did well for today and tomorrow.

Yeah, I guess obviously Great Britain has so many options, you know, for both singles and doubles. I know that, you know, Andy Murray and Evans are not here, and obviously they have been contributing to qualifications for the Last 8 in September. But still, Great Britain is a very strong team in this format. If we split single matches, then we're getting into the doubles where they have best players in the world, Skupski and Salisbury, and they have so many great players, it's difficult for them to choose who to put on the court.

We are a team that, as you can see here, we don't have any doubles specialists, but, you know, we rely on singles, but if it comes to doubles, we are also ready to pair up in the different combinations and give it all.

So we heard that the stadium is going to be almost filled tomorrow and it's going to be -- I know there is great British presence in this stretch in the coast of Andalucia. Also some Serbian people coming from our country. Obviously the atmosphere in the Davis Cup is quite different from any other event. You have to expect, you know, the noises also during the point, during the serve, et cetera. But that's the beauty of it, you know, so I'm really looking forward to it.

Q. Novak, just as someone who has played so much Davis Cup, what's your view on the format we're in? ITF say they will review the direction of this tournament after next season. Do you think home and away, how does that compare to this approach?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I know there has been a lot of discussions on that subject. Also with Kosmos and ITF and Kosmos taking the ownership of the competition years ago, and then changing the format, there has been a lot of criticism on that.

I actually personally feel that the best format will be somewhere in between the old one and the new one, but I don't think that this is best for the nations participating in the World Group. The fact that we, as a team, have not played in Serbia many years is not great, because we don't give an opportunity to, you know, people in Serbia to watch us play, especially young people, young tennis players.

You know, it also allows Federation to benefit in different ways from that home tie. So hopefully that can be back in some way.

I don't have in my mind personally a perfect format. I think

it's important to put it out on the table and discuss, but not discuss behind the closed doors. Discuss with players and discuss with Davis Cup teams.

I think everyone should have their say, because so far no one has been really communicating with us from ITF. So that's something I feel like should change, because obviously we also are very integral part of this competition. I feel like we can give some valuable information and feedback on what we think is the right way.

I don't think we all agree. You know, we will have probably difference of opinions, but I think the home-and-away ties is something the Davis Cup historically has been very famous for. And now giving one nation to host every year the Last 8 for now three, four years in a row, actually five, Madrid, Malaga, is too much, in my opinion.

It has to travel. This is a competition that is played globally. I feel like the Davis Cup Finals, at least if you're going to keep it at Final 4, Final 8, should travel every year. It shouldn't stay in one place more than a year.

Q. A question for Novak. There are seven really established tennis countries playing at this year's Final 8. Then there's Finland kind of breaks out as the odd one out. They brought thousands of fans and already made it to the semis. Have you followed their run this year? Did you watch the matches last night? What do you have to say about their fairytale run?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Yeah, it's a great run. I have seen their performances in Croatia in the group stage. Amazing. Both Ruusuvuori and Virtanen have been performing great. Yesterday obviously Ruusuvuori was not playing, but they managed to win. You could see the passion after they won the doubles (smiling).

It was surprising. I didn't know that there is such a big community of Finnish people here on this coastline. 3,000, 4,000, 5,000 people in the stands. That's the beauty of Davis Cup. It brings people together to cheer for their nation.

Yeah, with Ruusuvuori in the team, as well, they definitely have a chance to go very far. They are in the semifinals, so anything can happen.

Q. I don't know if you saw what Vasek said last night about organizing and tennis could and should be even bigger than it already is if only the people organizing it were doing their job properly. He highlighted the balls, he highlighted playing late at night and then early in the morning and injuries. Wonder if you heard that and also if you want to add something?

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NOVAK DJOKOVIC: No, I haven't. I haven't heard that. I actually saw Vasek just before I came here to see you guys, but I haven't seen his statement on that. But there has been a lot of discussions on the effect of the different balls and basically every week on the joints and the wrist and the shoulders and the elbows.

You know, I think someone told me that in terms of injuries this year comparing to other years, you know, drastically has gone up. So yeah, in terms of the balls, I absolutely agree there should be some discussion on that.

I actually spoke about that with Andrea Gaudenzi, the ATP president, and Massimo, who is the CEO, in Paris during the Paris-Bercy week. I shared my opinion and my views. Obviously they are thinking about various different options and ways of how to regulate and how to make it better for the players and prevent injuries.

In terms of the scheduling, I think, you know, there has been a lot of criticism and a lot of, yeah, basically players complaining about it. I think that should be addressed in a proper way.

Obviously Davis Cup and ITF is regulated differently from ATP Tour and from Grand Slams. You have different governing bodies, different schedules, different broadcasting demands. In the end of the day we know that the TV is the one deciding, fortunately or unfortunately, but there has to be more, I guess, discussions on that as well.

Q. Novak, I know you're not a stranger to Andalucia. You've spent a lot of time in Marbella. I wanted to ask you what you love the most about the Costa del Sol.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC: Well, I don't spend much time, but I do love to come. Actually, one of my brothers lives here, so it's one of the most beautiful places in the world, for sure. I mean, I love the fact that you have sun basically all year round, which doesn't get much better than that in terms of weather in Europe.

So for tennis players, obviously coming in in different parts of the year, also in wintertime, you can play outdoors, which is important because you have the first tournaments in the season starting in summertime in Australia playing outdoors.

Great food, people. You know, it's a different energy and it's a different vibe from different parts of Spain, like Madrid or somewhere else. You know, it's very nice. People are very kind. Africa is right there. Atlantic Ocean also very close by. So a lot of things culturally and lifestyle-wise that Andalucia offers.

