

Davis Cup Finals

Wednesday, 22 November 2023

Team Great Britain

Captain Leon Smith

Joe Salisbury

Liam Broady

Cameron Norrie

Jack Draper

Neal Skupski

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Welcome to the press conference for Great Britain. Questions, please.

Q. Maybe Cam and Jack for this. I wondered if you guys had watched Novak play in the ATP Finals, how impressed you were by his level, and how much of a threat he poses to the team?

JACK DRAPER: I mean, I watch him play most weeks, it seems. Yeah, definitely seen him play at the O2 Finals. He played an incredible level. I think most of the guys he was playing against were amazing, too, obviously top 8 in the world.

Yeah, he's obviously a really amazing player, one of the greatest tennis players of all time. He's definitely going to be a tough challenge this week. But I think the whole team is ready to face Serbia and we're ready to compete our hardest and see what happens.

CAMERON NORRIE: Yeah, I think along the lines of what Jack said, extremely impressive what he's been able to do at such a consistent level against the top guys in the world.

Yeah, I think it's an interesting one. You know, Davis Cup, there is a lot of hype, a lot of fans. It's a different kind of pressure. I think, for us, I think it's going to work in our favor and we love it. It's been a long ride this year and we've got a great team. We're all ready to compete.

Q. Jack, do you think you'll be playing Laslo tomorrow? If so, have you ever come across him? I don't think there is a head-to-head. Do you know much about him prior to this?



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JACK DRAPER: No, I think obviously they have Djere, Kecmanovic, I think Krajinovic is here as well. All three of those guys are amazing players. I think top 50, 60 in the world.

I don't know who I'll face, but it's definitely going to be a tough match whoever I play. I haven't played Djere before, but Kecmanovic I have played this year. But any one of them obviously is a really tough challenge. So going to have to be ready to compete for every ball.

Q. Liam, I just want to know about with Dan Evans, of course, and Andy unfortunately not being able to make it, and then obviously with alternatives, would like to know your thoughts on that and that blow to some extent at least for the team.

CAPTAIN LEON SMITH: Yeah, so obviously Dan's happened a few weeks ago so we had time to get over that. It was a blow. He's been with us in Colombia right at the start of the year and obviously played a huge role in what happened in Manchester, singles and doubles.

You know, Andy's was much more recent, you know, and obviously he's gutted. I'm sure if you guys have spoken to him in the interim period will know that. You know, it's been good for us, because we have got much better depth across the team in recent years. You know, when you have everyone that's there, you can, you know, have some thoughts of what might be the good matchups or, you know, who's playing the best form at that particular time.

With that said, you know, I said this to the guys the other night, I think there is some upside to how it's now formed. You know, first of all, we've got amazing players that have come in. You know, we've got, can't see where he is, Joe who came in who has just obviously won US Open, Tour Finals, it's amazing to have that.

Then obviously asked Liam to come in as well really last minute, who has done brilliant this year, reached top 100 for the first time. Wind the clock back, if we had had a couple of withdrawals five, ten years ago, it wouldn't have looked like that.

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So it's credit to all these guys that are playing at such a high level. For them to join Neal, Jack, Cam, we've got a great team. The upside to it as well is everyone knows where they stand. There's no ambiguity around who might play or waiting, tapping the shoulder from me to say you're in, you're not in, there's none of that. I think that can work in our favor as well.

Q. A question for Joe. How much does it mean to you to be back in this team? Would you look forward to playing Novak in doubles if it comes to that?

JOE SALISBURY: Yeah, I love being part of this team, love playing team events, and obviously playing for your country is kind of the highest, biggest stage you can do that. I have always said I'm available to play and want to play whenever I can, so obviously, yeah, I'm happy to be in the team and looking forward to playing.

Yeah, I think, yeah, if we play against Novak it will be a huge challenge obviously. He doesn't play that much doubles, but, I mean, he's probably the best player ever to hold a tennis racquet. Yeah, it's going to be very tough, so yeah, I think we're ready and we're looking forward to it.

Q. Two questions for Cameron, please. Just talk about the challenge of facing Novak Djokovic over the professional tennis net. As a second question, how was the final of the rugby World Cup? We noticed you on telly in Paris. Talk about that as well, please.

CAMERON NORRIE: Yeah, it's going to be a tough one. I think no better way to kind of being preparing to play Novak, you know. Since Vienna, took a bit of rest to get ready for this. Yeah, it's going to be really tough, but going to go out, fight for every point, embrace the atmosphere.

It's going to be an amazing stage. First time playing here in Malaga, so I'm excited.

Yeah, the rugby World Cup was really good, as well. Disappointing ending.

Q. Liam, I just wanted to ask you, can you tell us a bit about where you were, what you were doing when you got the call? Obviously a big deal for you. Leon has said there is no ambiguity about who's playing, so I'm wondering what you think your biggest role in this team is and what you'll focus on working with the team this week?

LIAM BROADY: Yeah, I was in France, in Calais playing some club matches. So, I mean, I'm glad I have been keeping my eye in at least in case the worst happens. It's

not like I have taken ten days off.

No, I mean, it's always a privilege to be at Davis Cup, never mind play it. So I think you've got to take the chance whenever you can. I think even for the guys here this week hitting, Stu and Billy, they're absolutely loving it.

You know, the coaching staff and everybody else behind the scenes is some of the best in the world, so it's just good to be able to get on court with them and sort of draw knowledge from them and see how all these guys, you know, work away from the court, as well.

Q. Cam, last time you played Novak, it was quite a spicy encounter. Looking back in hindsight, do you think that helped or hindered you? What sort of a mindset will it take to play him again?

CAMERON NORRIE: Yeah, I think when you watch him play and when the crowd's against him, I think he really likes that. I mean, he played a really solid match, and he was too good for me on that day.

Yeah, I'm going to go and be myself, give it everything and take it to him. You know, like I said, a huge privilege to play against him, compete against him, especially in Davis Cup. I have played him in a few big matches already.

I can't wait. You know, it's a huge challenge, and I think we're all ready to play Serbia. We're excited to get out there, and I think at the end of the day he's just another player, and I'm going to go run for everything and give it everything, and a good challenge.

Q. I'd like to know from Skupski and Salisbury particularly what do you think about those players who are not specialists in doubles? I mean, you are greatest doubles specialists. But you may have to play Djokovic, and Djokovic almost never plays doubles. What is the difference to play a player who doesn't play so often the doubles? What could happen again if you beat Serbia, you have to play Italy, and maybe Italy will put on court Sinner who also is not doubles specialist. What is the difference?

NEAL SKUPSKI: Yeah, first of all, Italy have still got to play The Netherlands, have to get through still. (Laughter.)

Yeah, like you said, playing singles guys they obviously don't play too much doubles matches. But yeah, we train doubles day in, day out. So we're quicker around the net than the singles guys. But yeah, they hit the ball a lot better than us from the back, the returns especially.

But yeah, we're just going to have to try and play on our

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terms, take time away from them. Yeah, me and Joe, we have played together before in the past. I think we play at a very good level. But yeah, we are looking forward to it, whoever they put out. They've got five guys, five different combinations. Yeah, we're really looking forward to it, and let's see what happens.

JOE SALISBURY: Yeah, I mean, it's different. It's a different challenge, but I think we're kind of used to it. We play a lot of tournaments throughout the year where we play against the singles guys who are playing doubles.

Yeah, obviously it's a little bit different than playing against the doubles specialists, but yeah, obviously they're great players and a lot of them play really, really good doubles, as well, as well as singles.

Yeah, it's a slightly different challenge, but yeah, it's going to be a very tough one nonetheless.

Q. To the singles players, this is kind of the leftist group of singles players you can really come across. Novak mentioned they haven't really played against many lefties recently, and they even struggled to find a lefty hitting partner. Wondering if you like that and if it gives any sort of advantage or help?

JACK DRAPER: I think being a lefty is always an advantage. We've obviously got a team of them. It also maybe works against us, as well, because we're playing righties, and we're kind of hitting with each other.

We've obviously got Billy Harris and Stuart Parker who have come in and been great to hit with. Yeah, we are getting plenty of righty practice, but being a lefty is always a good advantage. I'm glad that there is a few of us amongst us this week.

CAMERON NORRIE: Yeah, I think Novak has played a few lefties in his career. He's in decent form at the moment, as well. (Laughter.)

I think it probably doesn't matter if there is a lefty there or not. I think he's ready to play. When we watched him practice, he was playing great.

Yeah, I think, like Jack said, always a bit of a challenge to play against a lefty. Yeah, it is what it is.

Q. Cam, when Mike and I spoke to you just before Paris, you said that you're taking some time off and you couldn't actually remember the last time that you had done that. So I wanted to ask how it was, what you did, how your body responded, whether it was a bit of a freakout not being on the tour when the tour

was going on?

CAMERON NORRIE: Yeah, it was a much-needed rest. It was really nice. Just chilled and went for some walks. Went to the beach a little bit.

Yeah, I was just more excited to be back into practice, hitting the ball, and really pumped to be back doing that. I think it was much-needed for the body, too. I'm definitely feeling more rested.

I tried to prioritize this event over Paris, and it's, like I said, a great way to finish the year. Much-needed, and yeah, I'm looking forward to this week.

Q. Cam, you just used the word "challenge" about coming up against Novak. What is the biggest challenge of playing against him? What is it like playing against him?

CAMERON NORRIE: Yeah, I think he makes the court very small. I think that's his biggest weapon. And you feel like you really need to overplay in certain times. So I think it's important to play within yourself. It's going to be tough.

You know, I think especially I believe his serve is pretty underrated. I watched in the Tour Finals he was hitting the spots against Sinner. First set and a half was a different level.

Going to have to play a lot on your own serve and be ready to try to take it to him on his serve, and I think when you're kind of in control of the point, try not to rush it too much and always be ready to play another ball. The ball is always coming back.

Yeah, I'm going to have to run a lot more than usual, probably. Yeah, he makes it very difficult for the other guy. He almost likes being moving and being on defense.

Yeah, I'm ready for him. I have played him a few times. It's, like you said, a huge challenge.

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