

Davis Cup Finals

Friday, 24 November 2023

Team Australia

Captain Lleyton Hewitt

Alex de Minaur

Press Conference

A. de MINAUR/E. Ruusuvuori

6-4, 6-3

Team Australia - 2

Team Finland - 0

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Lleyton, your emotions? Obviously thrilled, no doubt. Alex, what did it feel like when that last point was won?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Yeah, pride again of the boys. Like I said out on the court, no Davis Cup match is easy and you don't take anything for granted and rankings get thrown out the window. We knew they were going to be tough opponents.

Yeah, really proud of the boys. Alexei stood up when he needed to today. That was a big day for him, big result. Super proud of him. He's done a lot of hard work. He was there in Manchester, put in the hours on the court. Supported the boys. He got his opportunity today and he took it with both hands.

Then this guy went out and did what he needed to do yet again. Yeah, you don't take any Davis Cup matches for granted. Yeah, Alex went out there, competed, did absolutely everything that we asked of him and what we expect. He deserved to be out there, you know, when we went through to the final (smiling).

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, for me at least that match was a little bit of a relief. Extreme, extreme team effort, again, as Lleyton said. Alexei coming out, not having played for Australia in three to four years, coming out to play a semifinals against a guy that's ranked 170 but plays like a top-50 player and came out with a huge, huge win.

Amazing credit, not only to what he's done today in the



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match but as Lleyton said in Manchester, and even since day one here in the camp, he's trained his butt off. He's done everything right.

First day he didn't get to play, he was out there supporting, like, the most out there on the bench. Just shows what this team is all about. I love every single one of these guys and wouldn't want to be here with anyone else.

Q. Thanks again for representing our country, and congrats on getting through. I know you don't know the opponents yet, but how does it feel this year compared to last year?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Well, similar feeling. You know, obviously relief at the moment to give ourselves an opportunity to be in the final match on Sunday.

As I said, you don't take anything for granted in Davis Cup. It doesn't matter the format. So we knew coming here every match was going to be extremely tough. You only have a day to prepare for your next opponents, as well, which isn't easy.

Just really proud of the boys and their efforts. No matter who we play on Sunday, it's going to be a bloody tough task, but once again, we'll go out there and leave absolutely everything we've got on the court.

Q. Lleyton, just to go back to Alexei, he's kind of been on the periphery of the squad for a little bit. What have you seen from him this year to make you realize that now is the time not only to call him up but also to use him today in the semifinal, whereas you didn't the other day?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Well, he's had a career-best year for him, and it's shown in his ranking. But, yeah, he's worked on small areas of his game. I think he's matured as a player, as well.

He's put in a lot of hard work on a couple of things in his game over the last probably year and a half or so. He's getting the rewards that we see. Start of the year, beating Taylor Fritz at the Aussie Open. He made a run in the

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Masters Series as well just before the US Open.

The reason for the decisions was matchups, both decisions for the No. 2 on both days. I knew that he had beaten the guy before earlier this year in straight sets, and we had full belief in how he was playing. We really primed him for the match today. Yeah, it ended up paying off.

Q. Congrats on getting to the final. Lleyton, it's another Davis Cup final for you. You have won some, lost some. Wondered if you could walk us through your best memories in a Davis Cup final? Maybe a bit of a throwback question, but I'd love to hear some insights from you.

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Yeah, well, the four finals as a player were completely different in a lot of ways. The first one obviously was my first year on tour playing, and I got thrown in the deep end and ended up in the Davis Cup final, which was pretty special, in France.

Then I have had all the emotions. The following year I was the No. 1 player on our team playing in a final in Spain in Barcelona in bloody tough conditions. Yeah, you win some, you lose some.

For me, probably the most special was winning 2003 though in Australia. That was something at Rod Laver Arena and playing against quality players in Spain at the time.

But this competition, it's never easy. Yeah, we get another opportunity on Sunday. You know, all we can keep doing is doing all the right things, preparing as well as possible, and then it's, yeah, up to us to try and execute on the day. You have to be in it to win it, and we're certainly there.

Q. Last year's loss, Lleyton, in the final must have hurt. I'm just wondering whether you might, in the way you communicate with the players in the next 24, 48 hours, whether you will be sort of thinking about that final as part of, you know, any kind of motivation or just desperate to obviously win this trophy?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: I don't think we need added motivation, to be honest. We have been on a journey now for a few years as a tight-knit group, and they know where they are now and they want to be in this position.

Sure, you try and motivate them in different way ways, but all the boys will be up for it no matter who takes to the court.

Q. Congrats for the back-to-back final. I have a

question for you, Lleyton. Italy and Serbia have a certain nonconventional double because they've got a great single player in it. I would like to ask you to share some thoughts about the doubles, and what is the trickiest thing to play for a conventional double against a real locked-in great single player?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Yeah, it's a tough one. You know, obviously we know Novak and Jannik are quality players. Doesn't matter if they play singles or doubles. We saw that with Jannik yesterday helping Italy go through.

So doesn't surprise me, though. You know, if the best guys, best singles players played in the world, played doubles week in and week out in all the majors, they would win plenty.

So it's more about who they match up with, I guess. That's a telling factor. Both teams have options I think with who they play together.

And then I've got full confidence in my boys. They know what they're doing on a doubles court. Yeah, I'd have a lot of belief putting them out against anybody.

Q. To both of you, there were a lot of Finnish fans in the crowd today. You have spoken a lot in the past about the format and the home-and-away format, going very old school. Did it today feel like a proper home-and-away tie, given it felt like there were Finnish fans all around the court and the stadium?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Yeah, certainly, I don't know as a player, but certainly did at the start. I actually thought the loudest was probably at the start of Alexei's match, the first match. It did feel like an away tie out there.

I can only smile. I like that. I like going in and disappointing everyone in the crowd (smiling).

I was quite happy with it, and as I have always said, I'd much rather have a passionate crowd out there enjoying the tennis, and I think that's what Davis Cup's all about.

Q. We obviously don't know who you're going to be playing on Sunday, so if you could look at the options or possibilities against Serbia and then separately against Italy.

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: It's tough either way. Obviously No. 1s both absolute quality players. They are as good as anyone going around at the moment.

Yeah, it's going to be a tough task. Both teams have

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options in their No. 2 players. They've got a lot of depth, both teams. As I said in the doubles, as well, if it comes down to it, then they've got choices to make in that as well.

So we'll sit back and watch tomorrow and make a plan sort of depending on who we're up against.

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