

# Davis Cup Finals

Tuesday, 19 November 2024

Team USA

Captain Bob Bryan

Taylor Fritz

Tommy Paul

Ben Shelton

Austin Krajicek

Rajeev Ram

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. Thanks, Team USA. We will begin with questions. Please raise your hand.

**Q. A question for the captain. USA always has really strong depth in the team. Talk about your team and your ambitions here this week.**

CAPTAIN BOB BRYAN: Yeah, I mean, look, the dream is to win the Cup. I think we all have the belief. Obviously, you know, the first hurdle is Australia, so we're ultra-focused on that. We're going to be prepared.

The practices are going well. We have a great roster, you know, from top to bottom. I don't need to go through all these guys. They have tons of experience. Ben has joined the team for the first time. We're very pumped to have him with us, and he obviously comes from college tennis. He knows what these team events are all about and, you know, being a Laver Cup participant, as well.

But, yeah, we're having a lot of fun being here. Spain and the organization committee have done a great job. Couldn't be better. We're just looking forward to Thursday.

**Q. Another question for you, Bob. As a former No. 1, what's the ideal moment to retire? Yesterday Rafa said that there was no ideal moment. In your opinion, as an ex-great player, what's the best moment to retire when you've had such a career?**

CAPTAIN BOB BRYAN: Yeah, look, it kind of varies with everyone's personal decision. We were talking about that, about Pete Sampras. He went out with a Grand Slam win.



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You know, that's kind of the storybook finish. Michael Jordan goes out with the title. Everyone would love for that to happen.

You know, it's cool to have Rafa here playing at home, getting all the fanfare that he deserves, but, you know, my brother and I retired during the pandemic, you know, at a tournament we didn't think was going to be our last. It's different for everyone.

Yeah, I mean, for Rafa, this seems like, you know, kind of a storybook ending for him, being that he's won five Davis Cups and he's so loved here in the country.

**Q. A couple questions for Taylor and Ben. Taylor, starting with you, how are you feeling? You have had a long year, lots of success. Coming from Turin and everything, how are you going to get yourself pumped up for this?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, I feel good. Obviously it's been a long year (smiling). I'm pretty worn out, but once I'm here, once I'm on the court, you know, playing this competition with the team, there's no way that I'm not going to go on the court and feel pumped up and feel motivated to play.

I think, you know, the fact that it's a team event, playing for all these guys, playing for the U.S., you know, even though it's been a long year, it gives me that extra motivation that I'm not worried that I'll be able to go out there and give it everything.

**Q. On the back of what Bob was saying, if you and Ben don't mind sharing personally, what do you think Rafa meant to you or the game of tennis?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: You go first. You're a lefty.

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, for me growing up, I was a big Rafa fan. Used to wear all his kits, his shoes, everything, a lot of neon colors. And being a lefty, he's a guy that I have always kind of watched and tried to learn things from.

One of those perfect examples of how to do things on and off the court, how to handle the press, how to win with

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class, how to lose with class. The way he competes, he could maybe be down 6-0, 5-0, 40-Love, and still have a chance to win. He's one of those guys you never think is out of it, one of those almost perfect competitors.

For me to meet him for the first time was pretty crazy. I got to practice with him a few times, which was an amazing experience for me. Obviously I never got to play him. Probably lucky that I never got to play him. I guess it's an experience that I wish I would have had.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, we obviously grew up watching him, watching Fed. He was, like, the most, pretty much like the perfect role model for younger tennis players, for kids. And it's been an honor to just get the chance to play him and to play someone who I obviously grew up watching.

Yeah, I mean, it's crazy that it's kind of just like an end of an era here.

**Q. Tommy, actually, could I ask you the same question, what you think Rafa meant to the game and what memory maybe of his you might have?**

TOMMY PAUL: Yeah, I mean, I guess we all know how special he was to the sport, and I think he will continue to be super special to the sport. For us, we all grew up watching him.

Like they said, even if he wasn't your favorite player, which for me he was, I mean, top two always, but you couldn't help but admire the way that he went about everything.

Like Fritz said -- I don't know who said it, but, like, he always won with class and lost with class. I think that's something that you can look up to, especially for a young kid.

Yeah, I mean, it's special to be at the same event with him when he's retiring. I think all three of us get to experience -- I don't know if you were there, but get to experience Roger's last tournament and Rafa's last tournament, so that's pretty special.

**Q. For anybody up there, any of you planning to try to watch some of today, Spain/Netherlands?**

CAPTAIN BOB BRYAN: We can't get tickets (smiling). I think the tickets are going for \$100,000. If you want to pay for me, I'll go (smiling).

**Q. A question to Taylor Fritz. There had been a lot of criticism in the beginning of this new format. Now we have No. 1, No. 3, and No. 4 in the world participating,**

**which is great for this format now. But did you ever share some of the criticism in the beginning? Would it convince you now to participate nevertheless?**

TAYLOR FRITZ: I think the format doesn't really have anything to do too much with the people playing. At the end of the day, this is still Davis Cup. The title remains the same. So I think everyone is still equally motivated to win Davis Cup regardless of what the format is.

So I don't think the format really influences too much who's going to be playing, but I never really minded the format. I like to just -- I think it's cool that we all come together here at the end of the year and just kind of play it all at once.

Teams still have the home-and-away ties earlier to qualify to get here. But yeah, I have never really minded it. I think it's an efficient way to do it. For me, whatever is going to almost, in a way, shorten the season, I'm always kind of in favor of if there is a way to do that.

**Q. My question is for Bob. Last time the U.S. were at the Finals there was a little bit of controversy about only bringing four players. I'm wondering, for you as captain, how important was it to have a complete team here? Can you talk about the advantage of having some doubles specialists on this side, as well?**

CAPTAIN BOB BRYAN: When I played Davis Cup, there was only an opportunity to put four players on the team. We were a little limited. If Roddick or Blake got injured, I would have to go play singles, which wasn't the best for the team. Now we have the options to bring five, three great singles players and a very experienced doubles team that's done it all.

So, you know, we're not limited on options at all. There is many ways we can go with lineups, and it's nice to have, yeah, just that flexibility. So we're always going to bring five in this format.

**Q. A question for Ben. Not related to tennis, but I'm from Montreal. What's up with the hat? Something special or you just like the logo?**

BEN SHELTON: It's red, white, and blue.

**Q. I'd like to know if, after what happened last week with Sinner winning the ATP Finals, do you think he will be favorite in each match by far or by a little gap? And who is the favorite in your opinion for your Davis Cup which gives a lot of importance to the doubles? I mean, doubles is 33% of the points.**

CAPTAIN BOB BRYAN: Yeah, I mean, everyone knows

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the year that Sinner has had. He's only lost six matches. I think he's probably the odds-on favorite to win every match he goes out there, no matter if it's 60% or 80%. He's probably, if you're in Vegas, you're betting on him.

Davis Cup's different. The atmosphere can bring out special performances in players. You have seen a lot of big upsets in this event over the years.

Look, they won it last year for a reason. They're a tough team, Italy. But there is a lot of teams that can win this tournament, and we have the belief we can do it.

**Q. Bob, it is a coincidence that the women are here this week, just because of what happened with Seville, but it's been quite a nice coincidence having both. I know with you guys, the American team lost when you guys are starting, but in some cases, Italians, both sides are here. Can you talk a little bit about do you think this is an added value to have the Billie Jean King Cup and Davis Cup in the same place? Would you like to see that happening in the future?**

CAPTAIN BOB BRYAN: Yeah, that's a tough question. I mean, the men and women together at the Masters events has brought value to those tournaments. They're a more valuable asset.

We were looking forward to seeing the women here. Unfortunately they got tripped up in a close match in the first round, but honestly, I think the team was looking forward to rooting for the women, seeing Lindsay and the girls, and I just I think it adds to the atmosphere having those ladies around. So why not?

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