

# Davis Cup Finals

Tuesday, 19 November 2024

**Team Australia**

**Captain Lleyton Hewitt**

**Alex de Minaur**

**Alexei Popyrin**

**Jordan Thompson**

**Thanasi Kokkinakis**

**Matthew Ebden**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Let's start the press conference with Team Australia. Questions.

**Q. One for Lleyton. Welcome to Malaga. You're playing the USA, clash of the titans, two huge tennis nations. Can you talk a little bit about what you're expecting from that?**

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Yeah, there's not too many easy matches anyway in the quarterfinals now, so against the States is going to be a tough one, but, you know, we look forward to the challenge.

We have had tough matches the last couple of years here. We have been able to dig deep and find a way to get through to the final, and we're going to have to do that again on Thursday.

Yeah, all potentially three matches are going to be extremely tough, and we're going to have to navigate our way through it, but as I said, we're looking forward to it.

**Q. My question is Alex. Can you talk about how you're feeling? You were just confirmed the other day for this tie. Just wondering, what was the deciding factor for you to be able to join them?**

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, look, I'm very happy to be back here. Obviously it's been a tough year with injuries, but I am feeling a lot better, and I'm feeling quite fit and ready to compete. So obviously if my body was holding up, I was always going to put my hand up and be ready to come here and play for Australia.



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**Q. Alex, I watched you train with Rafa one day, and I'm just wondering, we don't see it often at Davis Cup players from different teams. Obviously you did that. Can you tell me how that came about? How cool is it that you got that in before he retires?**

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, look, it was a special moment, for sure. I have been fortunate enough to share the court with Rafa a couple times, and I have hit with him a couple times, but it's always extra special, this potentially being the last dance. So it was good to get one last hit with him.

Yeah, it's going to be exciting, and I'm sure everyone is going to be watching the match this afternoon.

**Q. To each of Matt, Jordan, and Alex, you have been here now a couple of days. How have you settled in? How similar or different are the conditions here to Turin, to the three of you?**

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, I mean, it's indoor. It's not that easy, actually. The practice courts are completely different to center court. I would say the practice courts are more like Turin, and the center court is probably a bit more like Paris the week before that.

But we have all been playing indoors for a month. You know, we have all had plenty of matches these last few weeks, so I think we'll be ready.

**Q. Lleyton, you're always known as the ultimate fighter, and when Rafa came along, I guess he took that and ran with it, as well. Can you just speak a little bit, if you can, about what do you think was the most special thing about Rafa, and also, you were on court when he was training with Demon, just to be here for his last tournament?**

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Yeah, well, he goes down as one of the absolute greatest. I think how great a competitor he is, in my opinion, probably second to none, nearly in all sport.

As soon as he came along, I played him at a very young age, and you could tell he was destined for big things back



then. He's just been a great ambassador for the sport of tennis, really, and we have been very fortunate to have him at the top of the game for so many years, and he's certainly one of my favorites to watch.

**Q. I'd like to know, from Alex, if you are surprised about the fact that Sinner won the ATP Finals without losing a set in the whole tournament. And to Alexei Popyrin, if it was a nightmare during the year to think about last year finals and your match with Arnaldi that you could have won? How do you feel it now, because you must be much more confident after the wins you had in the Masters 1000 and everything else.**

ALEX de MINAUR: You go first, Mate.

ALEXEI POPYRIN: Yeah, obviously last year for me personally was really, really tough to take and also for the team. It was a tough moment, you know, back-to-back Finals, and losing to him in the Finals was really tough.

That three-setter against Arnaldi gave me nightmares for a while, but it's also motivated us I think to come back stronger this year, and hopefully we can go one step further.

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, and to add on to that, Pop has Montreal in his résumé now, so he's a Masters champ.

As for Jannik, I mean, he's had an incredible year. He's been pretty faultless, very tough to beat him on the court. You know, I played him in the first match, and I thought his level was very high. Yeah, he deserved to win.

**Q. Alex, of course you're here representing Australia, but it must be very special for you with your Spanish heritage to be able to play in Malaga. What is that like for you, and are you hoping the Spanish fans will be behind you?**

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, it's always great to come back here to Malaga. I think we have had a pretty good connection with the crowd throughout the years. We have played a lot of matches here. We've got the crowd behind us.

We've had some great results. I'm just hoping that we can keep it going. We can use the crowd. It's of course an away tie for us, but we are going to do our best to get the Spanish crowd to support us, because we've got some Spanish roots. So hopefully we can pull on that and get some good crowd support.

**Q. Lleyton, as a former World No. 1, what do you think is the ideal moment to retire when you've been such a**

**great player as Rafa was? What do you think of the timing of his announcement to retire?**

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Well, he knows better than anyone, you know, what he's been able to put his body through. Yeah, we have all seen that he's played with plenty of niggles and injuries for a number of years now, as well. It's about having that consistency being able to go out there and compete as close to 100% as possible. Otherwise, I know from my body, it gets pretty frustrating, as well.

So I'm sure it's special for him that he gets to be a part of the team here in his final tournament in his home country. But nevertheless, I'm sure it's a very tough decision.

**Q. Thanasi, I guess last word to you. You have been criss-crossing the world and winning Sydney and coming in over here, and how are you feeling and how are you feeling hitting up with the guys?**

THANASI KOKKINAKIS: Yeah, it's been an interesting schedule. I have decided to play, but sometimes opportunities come along, and you just got to take them.

One thing is for sure, I'm fresh. I haven't had too much miles under the legs the last sort of month or so. I'm good to go. If I get called upon, I'm good to go.

I have been here for about ten days getting ready with the boys. Yeah, if I get called upon, I'll be ready and excited. I feel like the last two years we have been to the Finals I haven't quite been ready. Yeah, this one I feel good and see what happens.

**Q. Question for Lleyton and whoever would like to weigh in. It's a unique situation this time with Billie Jean King Cup here. I know the girls unfortunately lost before you're starting. What do you make of this overlap? Do you think it's something that can add value if it happens again in the future?**

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Yeah, I don't know. Yeah, obviously there are a lot of changes for us coming here to the whole setup to the last two years that we have played here.

It's probably been a little bit tougher, to be honest, with courts and practices and stuff. You know, to deal with at least five guys in your team and then, you know, you've got other hitting partners and other players, as well, and trying to get enough court time has been a battle. I'm not going to lie, and to try and, you know, work out certain ways to get all of these guys as close to 100% ready to take the court on Thursday, no matter who we end up putting in.

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So who knows, though? I know the format is slightly changing a little bit, as well. Myself, everyone knows my opinion, and I think Tennis Australia and the Australian Davis Cup players of the past, we were very strong against the changes. We loved the home-and-away aspect of it.

It's nice in one way that that's coming back, slowly starting to come back, even though I think there has been some mistakes made in the last few years.

But for me, I think, yeah, we'd really like to hopefully host the Finals, as well. We'd like to get the opportunity to put a bid in for next year to be able to host the Finals in Australia. I think we deserve that. I have been working extremely hard with the Federation to be able to give us that opportunity.

It's frustrating for these guys to always have to come all the way over to Europe every single year to play in the Finals. I know how special it was for me to win Davis Cup Finals in Australia. I think we all know how good a tradition our country has in this competition for well over a hundred years. We'll see where that lands.

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