

Davis Cup Finals

Thursday, 21 November 2024

Team Australia

Captain Lleyton Hewitt

Alex de Minaur

Matthew Ebden

Jordan Thompson

Press Conference

EBDEN-THOMPSON/Paul-Shelton

6-4, 6-4

Team USA - 1

Team Australia - 2

THE MODERATOR: Press conference for Team Australia.
Questions, please.

Q. Congratulations. I just wondered, your reaction when you found out the team news for the U.S. ahead of the doubles today, what you had been expecting, preparing for, what your reaction was, how it changed your mindset?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, slightly surprised, but we knew they had probably three doubles teams they could have thrown in, or four. I think Fritz/Paul, Fritz/Shelton, Paul/Shelton, and obviously Krajicek and Ram. We were sort of ready for any of that, but yeah, obviously they had written down Krajicek and Ram, so it was a change, that's for sure.

But, yeah, we knew Ben obviously had a match already out there and he was serving huge. Tommy's a great player. It was going to be tough regardless, and we are just glad we combined well and got it done.

Q. Obviously very satisfying with the end result, but can you just comment on the way Thanasi played in that first match and how important that was.

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: He played like the winner of the New South Wales Open Challenger about a month ago (smiling). Yeah.



THE WORLD CUP OF TENNIS®

No, you know, me and the rest of the team know what Thanasi's level is like, and if we can get him going out there and playing at his highest level, he's dangerous for anybody. I don't care who it is.

You know, I had full belief in him. I know the rest of the boys did to go out there today. He was hitting it a treat all week leading in. He got what he deserved. He put a very tough training block in for us to get that win today, which was bloody important.

Q. Bob talked about the kind of part of the reason for the decision was an element of surprise to kind of throw you off. How quickly were you then able to focus on the match and not having to worry too much about your opponents?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: It didn't surprise us that much, to be honest. I'd seen them do drills during the week, so yeah, it wasn't a surprise.

And at the end of the day, it was, yeah, we knew who we were going with and we had to go out there, and these two just came off playing in the Tour Finals last week, and they were there for a reason, because they are bloody good doubles players.

They have put in a few good days' work together, getting them to gel together, and yeah, we were very confident with our boys going out there.

Q. Congratulations. Lleyton, Thanasi told us earlier that you guys thought that Tommy Paul was going to play the first one, and then they said they thought Popyrin was going to play. Just from your perspective, having been a player in the Davis Cup and now the captain, how has your perspective changed about the kind of decisions that need to be made with lineups? Is there an element of mind games? Is there an element of based on purely analytics and form? How do you approach it?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Well, it's not easy for everyone, to be honest. I didn't have to play in this format, so I always knew who I was playing. You know, there was



the occasionally swap of an injured player, but we, back in the old days with the great format, five sets, home and away, we knew the day before on the Thursday at 11:00 when the draw was made of who was going to be playing on that Day 1.

Very rarely did that ever change. We had 24 hours, and, you know, it's not easy for any tour player, because it's completely different. It's not what you're used to.

Occasionally obviously for a third day in the Davis Cup, the old format, would change, and you'd have to deal with it, but yeah, there's a certain degree of strategy involved now, absolutely.

Q. Do you like it?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Not really (smiling).

Q. Lleyton, this is for the Olympics. I will show you a picture, and I want to you to let me know what do you think about this guy that retired this week, and what do you remember of this generation that you share with him? This is the picture.

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Yeah, I don't really want to remember that, to be honest (smiling), because I was -- you know, he beat up on me, and I was -- yeah, I don't have too many excuses, but I was playing on one leg that night in Beijing in the Olympics, and he was probably the worst opponent, and about two days later I was in for surgery.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: I think I said it the other day again, and he's one of the greatest competitors in any sport that we have ever seen. It was a privilege to be a part of his career in a small way, to play against him, play doubles with him, coach against him. I have done the full circle with him.

As I said the other day, he's an unbelievable ambassador, and yeah, all credit to him. He thoroughly deserves everything he's achieved.

Q. Lleyton, I haven't 100% fact-checked this, but I think since the new format change and with these Finals, this might be the first time you have won a tie without Alex winning a singles. I'm just wondering how important that was for you as evolution as a team? Because they have all been great servants for you, but...

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Yeah, it's not something I

think about, that's for sure. Just really trying to working out the matchups and the guys that are going out there to give them the best opportunity to win their individual match on each given day.

Yeah, we do have a good team though around us. We have relied on Alex and what he's been able to do in Davis Cup an awful lot. It's nice that we could repay the favor today for him.

Q. One more for Matthew and Jordan, as a general rule, would you rather face a doubles team who play together regularly or two singles guys who are just...

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: We don't care. We play whoever. Thanks. We're all good for now. Thank you.

Q. Obviously we don't know who you'll play next, but how much does what happened last year against Italy remain in the mind? Would you like another crack at those guys?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Whoever. They're obviously, yeah, a quality team and one of the toughest teams here, for sure. Yeah, if we're up against them, we'll be up for the challenge. But it's not going to be any easier than it was last year, either.

At the moment, we've got to enjoy the win today and all focus from tomorrow onwards will be on who we face on Saturday.

Q. Alex, just looking to the match you played, how does that compare to last week in Turin? Do you feel that he had a bit of momentum after that match going into today? Did you feel that he really needed to step up because Australia was up 1-Love? And to Lleyton, if it is Argentina, your thoughts on potentially playing them.

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, look, I would have loved to come out today and play a better match. It was always going to be a tough opponent playing with a lot of momentum and confidence.

Yeah, I think today was about moments. I didn't play well in the important moments, and my serve let me down in the games that I got broken.

I did my best to give myself a chance, but if I wanted to beat him today, I needed to bring a better level and that wasn't there today.

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Yeah, Argentina I think is a very well-balanced team, pretty even across the board, to

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

be honest, with all their singles guys and their doubles team play together throughout the year, obviously.

None of the matches would be easy if we had to come up against them. Yeah, they probably don't have that powerhouse player like Italy do, but they're a very even-balanced team.

Q. A question to the doubles players, especially for Matthew. All the credit to you guys, but Matthew, you played amazing today. I want to know on which part of your career you realize that you're a natural doubles player, not singles?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Well, I think, yeah, I was okay in singles but I found more success in doubles, for sure. And I'm glad Jordan was by my side today. He played amazing, I thought. Better than me, actually. Well, we both played well when we had to, and it was just a team effort.

When did I become a doubles player? Probably three, four years ago I started focusing more on doubles, and I played a doubles match with Lleyton in Davis Cup back in the day. Always played lots of doubles. I sort of wished I'd have a doubles career maybe once my singles career was over, and that's gone pretty well for a few years.

I'm just happy to be in this team and be able to play my part and be relied on and play well when it matters. So, you know, with all these guys behind me and beside me and pushing me, yeah, it's helped me go to new heights, for sure.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports