

# Billie Jean King Cup

Tuesday, 12 April 2022

Team Ukraine

Captain Olga Savchuk

Katarina Zavatska

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We have team Ukraine, Captain Olga Savchuk and player Katarina Zavatska.

Questions.

**Q. Could you talk about your thoughts on the tie, what's happening in Ukraine, and how you dealt with that, the platform you have.**

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Well, on my side, it's very tough. Every day it's tough. There is no one day that we don't think about it. I talk about me. Every day I'm calling to my parents, my family, to ask them if they're alive. It seems like very tough, rude, but it's true. This is the reality right now.

Of course, inside there are some, like, aggression on Russian nation, soldiers, the one who kills people, there are children every day.

But on the other side we just have to live. For example me, what I can do is to play tournaments, to earn money, to send this to my family to help them because nobody has a job right now there in my family. Everybody is just home. They have nothing to do to earn. They help also other people.

Yeah, for the moment we live it like this and I try to do my best here to focus every day on tennis court as much as I can and help my way like this.

**Q. Where is your family?**

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: So my mother, my grandmother and one also lady and her son, they are living in my apartment in France where I rented. It's my base, tennis base there. I practice in France. My dad, yes, moved them to the border, to Poland. They are safe. It was on, like, the fifth day of the war.

My dad and all other family, grandfather, my niece, I have a lot of family in Ukraine, they are in Rivne, the city where

# BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

BY  BNP PARIBAS

I'm based, where I was born. They are there.

Of course, you know, they want to move, but you understand that for women, for women to leave without their man, it's very tough to leave. My cousin, for example, she's pregnant. I have my niece, she's almost five years old. It's impossible to be alone in this kind of situation because all the men has to stay, like my dad, he's there.

He's supposed to fly on Thursday, 24th of February, to meet me in France, to help me, to go with me on the tournaments. But unfortunately Thursday, 24th, the war started, the bombs started to hit. He was in Kyiv. Unfortunately I didn't see him.

**Q. What are your emotions?**

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Many emotions at the same time. Many emotions. Beginning it was fear. First week actually was not even fear, but...

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: ...shock and fear.

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: You cannot realize. I was calling my dad every 30 minutes, my mom, saying, Are you coming? Are you coming? I couldn't basically realize that it's happening. My dad will not come, definitely. My mom is there with my dad. I'm alone, I have nobody.

Yeah, it was just shocking and fear. First week it was tough to do anything. Just to be even around, I don't know, surrounded by people, who listen music, who laugh, who live, who talk, it was impossible. I understand people have to live, but at that time...

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: It was surreal. It's beyond explainable and imaginable. It's tough to explain how we feel. Yeah, I think it's very important to know it.

As Katia said, it's really tough. It's like we live in two different realities. Here we are. Of course, we have to continue to support our families.

But, yeah, sometimes just like having food, I'm thinking about my grandpa and aunt who are in bomb shelter now. How I can even have a cup of tea right now? My family is,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

like, underground. I have goosebumps when I even talk about it.

I think I can speak about all of us, for sure, we all had also, in the beginning especially, emotions like guilt that you're not there and your family is there. We went through all kinds of emotions.

Now it sounds scary to even say, but you kind of get used to it. You wake up, first thing you do is check to see if your family is okay, and check the news. We do that basically non-stop.

**Q. There's a lot of support financially from the USTA. What has that meant to you?**

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: I think that's great. We are really appreciate and grateful for that because they really, like, came up right away with this plan, with the support and help. It wasn't even a question.

We feel really welcome, right, here?

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: We feel really welcome here.

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: Everything what we need, we get it without even a question. We are really appreciated for that.

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Very thankful for everything what they are doing for us.

**Q. There's a lot going on in Ukraine. It's very hard, I'm sure, to keep your focus. To that point, are there moments, given what's going on in your home country, when you're out there on the court, where you just blank everything out and are focused on the task at hand, which is of course in terms of this tournament to win? You want to get in the finals, win this thing. A lot of the same subject here, but how do you manage that? Are there moments when you're able to lock down and play the ball in front of you, block everything out?**

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Well, at the beginning when the war started, the first maybe week, yeah, first week, I could not train to be honest. It was impossible because I was only thinking about what is happening in Ukraine the first week out.

Second week I understood that I have to do something. If I'm not doing anything, I'm just like dying every day. The same mentally, more mentally, physically also. The second week was like I only play tennis and I tried to focus as much as I can on this ball to at least kind of physically

feel okay because it was killing all of this. It kills you physically. Even though you're not in Ukraine, you're worried every day, every second for your family, all the people in Ukraine.

Day by day for me the court was the only place where I could live my life because there was a ball, there was a racquet, and I just have to hit it and not think about it. It's the most amazing thing, what a chance to play tennis and to be on the court, to be able to do something like that, to be tight, to worry on the court or be nervous on the court, it went like that, I don't know, number 10th priority. It was, Okay, I hit it, I can do this right now and it's great.

Of course, you finish the practice, you are on the phone, you check news. Everything is fine, you come back to reality.

For me being on court was a little bit, like, unreal, you know? Now I started to play tournaments like Miami, Charleston. When I'm getting a bit maybe like stressed on the court or something, I'm thinking about, Why would I be stressed? There is so much more going on, so it's just a tennis match, it's just a tennis ball. To be afraid of something like nothing, you know?

Yeah, just every day I just keep my focus on this ball, yellow ball, and that's it. Yeah, it's only like that every day.

**Q. You're probably familiar with the phrase that's above the entrance into Centre Court Wimbledon talking about victories, there's a bigger concept out there about life. A war in your home country...**

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: I think it's really hard to think that way every day, every second of your life. Yeah, you can't really like save the whole world and think about only that. Now I think about it more. As Katia mentioned, the court is the only place right now where we don't think.

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Yes, is true.

**Q. I'm not going to put words in your mouth, but say you go on to win this thing, you would probably trade in your trophy for peace in Ukraine. You would probably do that?**

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Yes.

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: Of course, yeah, without even thinking.

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Every day, a simple practice, I feel like I do something good. I need to feel also this, that I'm going somewhere.

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: We also think at least maybe our match, our tie, will give our people some things to get their mind off. It's probably impossible, but at least some hope. I think it's also very important, yeah, that we play, we fight and we try to win.

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Yes, definitely.

**Q. We know you're fighters.**

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: We will fight like never.

**Q. What do you imagine it's going to feel like on Friday to play, representing your country?**

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: I think it will be something very special, I would say.

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Yes.

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: I'm sure we're going to have also support from American people as well because we feel that even outside of tennis a lot. It will be very special.

Yeah, we are proud that we have this chance and opportunity, as well.

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: We are proud that we are Ukrainians, yeah, we have this chance to compete for our country right now, especially at this period. We going to give it all.

**Q. About what the USTA is doing, how you felt welcome here. When Kathy and Shelby and Jess were in here, they talked about you're going to have a dinner as the two teams.**

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: Yeah, we didn't want to go, but (laughter)... No, I am joking.

Yeah, we know, of course, Team USA very well on the tour. Kathy, really great captain. I love her really. We are looking forward. I think it's very nice gesture from Team USA just to go unofficially because normally it's very official. Like this, I think it will be very easy.

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Yeah.

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: Enjoyable.

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Very kind, very generous and very nice from them to be welcomed like this, have a dinner together, yeah. Just to be like normal people (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

CAPTAIN SAVCHUK: Thank you.

KATARINA ZAVATSKA: Thank you.

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