

# Billie Jean King Cup

Thursday, 10 November 2022

Glasgow, Scotland, UK

Emirates Arena

**Team Australia**

**Storm Sanders**

Press Conference

S. SANDERS/A. van Uytvanck

6-2, 6-2

Team Australia - 1

Team Belgium - 0

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Congratulations. Just to start with, can you reflect on your performance today and what you felt you did really well?**

STORM SANDERS: Thank you. Yeah, today, firstly, I'm really proud of myself to be able to back up Tuesday's result. Yeah, when Mol told me that I would play singles again, I was, like, Okay, let's go again.

I love this team environment. Obviously today they had a few options for singles, and Alison didn't play yesterday, but we saw her practicing, so we weren't quite sure what the lineup was going to be until an hour before the match.

For me, that's kind of fine. I like to play my type of tennis anyway no matter who I'm playing. I'm an aggressive player. So for me even before the match, I was trying to be really clear about what I was trying to do.

Yeah, the first game was quite a long hold. Kind of the same as Tuesday, actually. Kind of managed to get out of the first game and kind of be under pressure straightaway. I enjoy those moments.

I felt like today, even though it was 6-2, 6-2, it was a lot closer than the score. There was a lot of key moments where it could have swung Alison's way.

I think I just played really well under pressure and just managed to keep the pressure on her serve. I served really well today. I faced a couple of breakpoints, but I felt



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in control of my serve, and I think, yeah, that put pressure on her to hold.

Yeah, it was actually a tough match, and obviously playing for your country, it's quite emotional, yeah, tennis. I said before the game plan kind of goes out the window and you've just got to play with fight and determination and just try and stick with it. I think that's what I did today.

**Q. It's becoming quite a regular thing, you performing so well for your country in this competition. Have you surprised yourself, or are you at the point now where you're just expecting yourself to play at this really high level?**

STORM SANDERS: In some ways, I feel like I have always believed that I can perform at this level, not just for my country but weeks in, weeks out, WTA events. This year I have actually played a lot of top-20 players. I think I have qualified for five or six WTA events. Played maybe six top-20 players on big courts so I feel like I have had those moments now and gotten pretty close with them as well.

So I feel like my level has been there, but obviously representing your country is a whole nother level, but, you know, I use those experiences to try and help me. I absolutely love playing for Australia. For me it's the biggest honor, and it's the thing I want to do the most in my tennis career would be to, yeah, win the Billie Jean King Cup for my country, and same with Olympics.

Yeah, I think it just brings out the best in me. I just use the support that we have on the sidelines and also the support from home. I think I just channel that energy and use it in a positive way on the court.

**Q. You spoke there and a bit the other day about still having ambitions in singles on the tour. How hard is it to get that singles ranking up when you're also playing a lot of doubles and maybe entering -- is it hard to enter the same event in singles and doubles? Can you talk about the logistics and practical challenges of that?**

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STORM SANDERS: Yeah, it is really difficult for me at the moment. My singles ranking is about 230 I think. So that's means I'm not getting into WTA events that I'm playing doubles at. I have to kind of schedule in some ITF events for singles.

This year I did find it really hard to do both. I would do well in doubles, go deep, and then the next week I'm either missing out on singles because I was in qualifying and would miss out or have one day to prepare. I was always underprepared.

It is really tricky, but for me it's a good challenge if I'm doing well in doubles. I want to be playing the biggest events in the world. Whether it's singles or doubles, for me it doesn't matter. I want to be going deep at those big events. I achieved one of my childhood dreams of winning a Grand Slam this year. That's the thing for me, doesn't matter if it's singles, doubles, or mixed. I'm a Grand Slam champion. I think it's awesome.

Next year I do want to try and do really well in singles too. I think now that I'm 10 this week in doubles, I can try and really set up a really good doubles schedule and try and play singles around that. It's definitely a work in progress and trying to figure out, yeah, how to manage both, and ideally it would be nice to have my singles ranking a little lower so I can play at the same events.

But, yeah, it's okay. I'll figure it out. Like I said, it's a good problem to have. If I'm doing well in doubles and going deep at those tournaments, that's also great. Yeah, we'll see (smiling).

**Q. You said some nice words about Gavrilova on the court. Obviously can't be here because of her injury. Are you still in touch with her? Is she still on the group chats and everything?**

STORM SANDERS: Yeah, I talk to Dash every day. We're best friends. She's one of my bridesmaids at my wedding next week. I was one of her bridesmaids. Obviously she had an amazing year. We're just all so happy for her. Obviously the injury was just horrible to see and just really tough for her.

But she's such a character, obviously. Everyone knows that. She likes to stay involved, and she's actually commentating back home on the local network back home.

You know, we have been trying to watch some, listen to some of the commentating, which I don't know, it's going good, it's been quite entertaining. Yeah, we all stay in touch with her. She's just such a great person to have.

Even if she's not here in person, she messages us all and wishes us luck. I think that's the best part about Team Australia. We have such good energy amongst all the teammates.

I think I said on Tuesday that not just this week but every week we travel a lot of weeks of the year, and we are kind of there for each other always at tournaments, practicing together, doing dinners, watching each other play. I think that's, yeah, something really special about the Australian players.

**Q. I was going to ask you about last year. You had a career-best win over Elise Mertens to put Australia into the semifinals. How much confidence does that sort of win give you when you play against some of the higher-ranked opponents?**

STORM SANDERS: Yeah, that definitely was one of my highlights of my career. That was, yeah, a massive win for me. It was all last minute because Ajla got sick. For me to represent Australia as the No. 1 player in singles, I honestly didn't think that would ever happen. I never thought I would be doing that ever.

So that was really cool. Then obviously to get the win and play such good tennis, it gave me a lot of motivation for the Australian summer. Even though I had some tough first rounds, playing Sabalenka first round of the Australian Open and Rybakina, but I played really good matches. Even for this week, that definitely has just put confidence in my mind. At the same time, it was a year ago, so everyone's -- I think I'm a much better player than a year ago, and I'm sure that's the same with other players too.

It's a new week, but to have that experience from last year, just to draw on that and use that, not just for me but the whole team is very motivating and positive.

**Q. When you entered Adelaide in 2021, last year, qualifying, could you imagine the journey you'd go on over the next two seasons? You said Grand Slam champion, career-high No. 8 in doubles, now in the top 10 in doubles this week, and representing your country at the Olympics and obviously getting wins here, just a few words on the journey you have been through.**

STORM SANDERS: Actually, it's making me emotional. Yeah, it's amazing, like, with COVID, I couldn't go home at all last year. That was really tough. Yeah, I have had a lot of injuries. 2018 I didn't have a ranking, singles or doubles. Thought, yeah, tennis might not be for me.

Yeah, to achieve those goals, you know, it's just amazing, but I just credit that to my team around me. Not just me

but my fiancé and I have had people in my corner for the last 10 years. From Tennis Australia, I have Fish, Pratty. They're family to me.

I'm getting married next week, and a lot of people coming are tennis people. For me, they're like my family. I don't know. It's just amazing. To be honest, it hasn't really sunk in yet that, yeah, I guess a Grand Slam champion, but it's really cool. But for me I also don't like identify myself as just a tennis player. I have a lot of other things that I enjoy and stuff, which I think helps.

But to, yeah, to achieve these kind of goals after playing for so long, yeah, it's just amazing. I guess I haven't really had time to reflect on it yet. It's just been such a crazy year. After US Open I went home for seven days and was back in the U.S. trying to play singles.

Yeah, now I'm here. Yeah, it's been crazy, but I'm really looking forward to going home and just reflecting and celebrating with my family and those people around me. Yeah, I can't wait. And get married (smiling). Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: We have two questions that came through virtual media. Are these results among your highlights for the year?

STORM SANDERS: Yeah, definitely. Like I said, representing Australia for me is like my biggest priority, and, you know, the greatest honor for me that I could ever do. So to win representing the green and gold is definitely a highlight for me.

You know, we're here to win the whole competition. We are not just here to participate or make the semifinal. We made the semifinal last year, which was amazing but we're here to win.

I think, you know, when you're representing your country, their rankings go out the window a little bit. Doesn't matter what you have done on paper. It's basically you go out there and you fight and you give it everything. Definitely a different type of pressure.

I think I relish that. I love it. Yeah, I'm just excited, yeah. Let's keep going.

THE MODERATOR: What do you think has brought about these convincing results?

STORM SANDERS: I just think the support of the team. A lot of weeks on the road I'm on my own. I'm with maybe one other person, you know, my coach or a friend. This week, you know, we have the full support team, and I have known a lot of people on the team, like the staff, for over 10

years. They have been a massive part of my journey.

From Australia, it is tough to travel with everyone. These weeks are the best, because we have such an amazing team. If I'm feeling a little bit nervous on court, I can just look over and everyone is supporting me. I think that's just one of the coolest experiences. I try and use that as much as I can, and I think for me, yeah, that energy helps me. Yeah, brings out the best in me.

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