

Billie Jean King Cup

Thursday, 10 November 2022

Glasgow, Scotland, UK

Emirates Arena

Team Great Britain

Captain Anne Keothavong

Alicia Barnett

Olivia Nicholls

Press Conference

BARNETT-NICHOLLS/Bolsova-Masarova

7-6, 6-2

Team Great Britain - 3

Team Spain - 0

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Were you nervous? You didn't seem to play with nerves.

ALICIA BARNETT: I think at first we were both a little bit nervous. There was a lot riding on that match, but we have done this. We have played a lot of matches together, and we just stuck to what we knew. It seemed to pay off tonight with the support we had on the sidelines, was incredible, and the crowd really helped us get through that.

Q. You seem quite calm now.

OLIVIA NICHOLLS: I think we are just exhausted. I mean, there has been so much adrenaline pumping, like even on the side of the court, trying to get the girls through those first two matches.

We actually stayed out for Harriet's match a lot longer than we probably should have to try and get her through. Yeah, just riding on adrenaline the whole match. I think we started to feel it a little bit like 4-1 in the second, and there was a massive hold on Lissy's serve.

Yeah, I think this is exhaustion. We are absolutely over the moon. Couldn't be happier.

Q. Feels like you made a difficult choice on doubles,



**BILLIE JEAN
KING CUP**

2022 FINALS GLASGOW

BY > GAINBRIDGE

so what's it like to see these two win both their matches?

CAPTAIN KEOTHAVONG: Look, I think I said it the other night. You know, even when we were 2-Love down against Kazakhstan, I think the attitude and the spirit in which Lissy and Liv played that doubles match with was just really infectious. For today's match, they knew what was on the line. They went out there, and they were very clear tactically with what they needed to do, how to disrupt their opponents.

You know, they held their nerve. Yeah, it was just wonderful to see everything unfold today. I mean, I still can't believe it. I mean, to beat Spain without dropping a set, I mean, I think in Fed Cup, Billie Jean King Cup, I think that's got to be the biggest win certainly in my time as captain.

But knowing that we had to win, knowing that we had to win 3-Love, and then the girls just smashing it by not dropping a set, it was just unreal.

Q. Alicia, I saw, is that your dad, gave him a hug? He's a bit of a tennis nut; is that right?

ALICIA BARNETT: No, he's not a nut at all.

Q. He really likes tennis?

ALICIA BARNETT: No, he loves tennis. Actually, he will be really proud of this, he's now the president of Painswick Tennis Club, which I'm not sure...

CAPTAIN KEOTHAVONG: Who got honorary membership this week?

ALICIA BARNETT: Yeah. My dad, he came up, he drove up from Gloucestershire this week to be here, and he's actually come up alone. But he's, yeah, he's really, really happy. I think he's probably lost his voice as much as I have.

I just want to say that, yeah, I lost my mum a few years back but I think she would have actually loved this. Yeah,

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

it's just been amazing.

Q. I was going to ask you about what it's been like for your family watching you this year. I mean, both of you. But what it's been like to watch you go from tournaments you were playing a year or two years ago to represent your country in that kind of arena. I mean...

ALICIA BARNETT: Yeah, look, I think Liv and I wouldn't be here without the support from our families and our friends and our coaches. There is a lot of support and a lot of belief.

I don't think we would be there without them pushing us and saying, Keep going for your dreams. Without that support, we wouldn't be here.

Of course I don't think we'd be here without each other. Yeah, it's been an amazing year. Just a year that keeps on giving.

Q. For Anne, what did you make of the crowd today? What would you say to people thinking of coming down now for the weekend? Of course you were underdogs. You're definitely going to be here Saturday, maybe Sunday. What would you say to the fans?

CAPTAIN KEOTHAVONG: Well, look, I think the atmosphere today was, yeah, a different level to the other night. It was great to see more people come and support the team.

I hope, yeah, I hope more people will, you know, recognize the effort that it's taken from the team to get to this stage of the competition and come and back the team.

It really is, it's a momentous moment. We are fortunate to be in this competition for reasons you're all aware of, but to then deliver and get through to the semifinals, I mean, it's incredible. It really is.

It's down to the players. The way they approached the match today, yeah, just amazing.

Q. To the players, then, how do you feel going into the weekend, semifinal, how far can you go?

OLIVIA NICHOLLS: The sky's the limit after what we have shown so far. I mean, we were definitely underdogs in this group. No doubt about it.

Both the singles girls, Harriet and Heather, getting unbelievable wins today. Why not? We have shown what

we can do on the doubles court at well. I don't see there's any players or teams here that we shouldn't walk onto court thinking we can't beat. We will just keep going.

Q. Anne, looking ahead to Australia, kind of how do you assess them as a team? How do you think we match up against them?

CAPTAIN KEOTHAVONG: Look, I think we have got, we certainly have a great chance. I know we have been watching Storm Sanders playing really well at No. 2. You know, I think she's probably been the standout for the Aussie team? What happened to Elise today?

Q. She had a shoulder...

CAPTAIN KEOTHAVONG: When did that come on?

Q. She was 4-1 up in the second set.

CAPTAIN KEOTHAVONG: A set, 4-1, 40-Love?

Look, they are a tough team. They are a team with plenty of experience in this competition. Gee, they haven't heard Heather and Liv with their Aussie accents, psyching them out before we even make it to the court.

But look, we have to believe, and we certainly, yeah, we're on a high at the moment, but tomorrow it's back to work and preparing for that match against Australia in the same way that we prepared for this match. It will be business as usual.

Q. To both of you, just curious, when you came out of college, what did you think was possible in your career, and how does steering your team into a Fed Cup semifinal compare with that?

OLIVIA NICHOLLS: Well, I think, look, we are both great examples that you don't have to go pro at the age of 16, 17, 18, like I didn't start my professional career until I finished university at the age of what, 21, 22.

Lissy, the same. I went to English university. I went to Loughborough. Lissy went to American university. Shows both pathways, you can go on to do great things.

I just hope that we have shown this week or throughout the year, et cetera, that there are so many different pathways in this sport and that you don't have to go pro at a really young age. I think the time we had at university really allowed us to develop as players, as people.

Then when we did come out onto the tour, we weren't tired. We were fresh, ready to go. Maybe some people, when

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

they go out to start their professional careers when they are young, they might get burnt out at the age of 22, 23. We are veterans, as it were, but especially in doubles, who's to say we couldn't have another 10 years on the tour?

ALICIA BARNETT: We weren't like the best juniors ever, but we love tennis and we just kept plugging on. I mean, I hope that this is like an example for like the younger generation, like if you have a dream, just go for it. If you have the means and the desire, you can make it work.

I don't think Liv and I at the age of 15 really truly believed that was going to happen, but we wanted it. We tried and we got here and we are in the semifinal (smiling).

Q. It feels like it's been quite a sudden turnaround this week from where we were Tuesday to now to where you are tonight. I just wondered, have you noticed the last couple of days that was anything different compared to previous years? Was there bit of added belief after that doubles win on Tuesday night?

CAPTAIN KEOTHAVONG: Yeah, look, I mean, it's down to their doubles win on Tuesday night that kept us in this competition. We were all, again, I think if you watch that doubles match, it's hard not to feel the joy and, you know, and feel the camaraderie between the players. You know, really truly was infectious. Despite losing the match overall, I think we were all able to go back to the hotel thinking we are still in this and we have a chance.

You know, Spain helped us out yesterday, but it was, I mean, it was late by the time we knew -- were you in bed? Watching?

OLIVIA NICHOLLS: I didn't see the match.

CAPTAIN KEOTHAVONG: The rest of us support staff were up watching the doubles match and watching everything unfold. You know, waking up this morning, yeah, there has to be the feeling of optimism, you know, where we are underdogs but we can still do this.

You know, again, it goes back to the players. I mean, I wish I could tell you I had some magic star dust I sprinkled. But we had a good practice session yesterday, pretty relaxed at Scotstoun, but they were clear with the singles girls. We went over Spanish players in terms of video analysis. We did all of that before going to the practice site yesterday afternoon.

Claire Curran has done a great job preparing these girls on the doubles court as well going through a lot of analysis.

So everyone went out there with a clear, clear picture of what they had to do, and there was no kind of, you know, yeah, no kind of moving away from that. They stuck to it and they delivered. That's what you hope in the heat of battle. You know, you can have the best tactics, but you still need the player to deliver under pressure. Today that was a good one for us. You know, not every day does it go your way, but today it did.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Harriet's performance and sort of how she's grown throughout the year and how impressed were you by everything that she showed out there?

CAPTAIN KEOTHAVONG: Yeah, she was incredible. I mean, I think what really helped Harriet was witnessing Heather's performance earlier. Then, you know, Heather has kept us in this, and, right, I have seen Heather play really well. I'm capable of playing really well.

Having that inner belief. I don't know what she told you earlier, but she would have been tight closing that out, but she showed herself and showed everyone else that she was able to do it. That was a fantastic win against Badosa.

Q. From Kazakhstan, first of all, on behalf of our Federation, congratulations to all of you. The first match, to achieve the victory and today you made a great job. Was it a sustainable coincidence or happy miracle?

ALICIA BARNETT: I mean, I felt like all of us have been working really hard all year. This doesn't just happen overnight, does it? But I think we have said this a million times, but we have an amazing team behind us. We have amazing support staff, and I think all of us just prepared the best we could and controlled what we could. We went in there, and I think all of us just had a lot of fun today.

I'm not sure about miracles or anything, but I thought we just took every moment we could and just enjoyed every moment. Enjoyed being on home soil and it paid off. We have all lost our voices for it.

CAPTAIN KEOTHAVONG: I think also what Liv and Liss bring something different to the team which we haven't had before, it's not just the fact that they specialize in doubles, but they have had a life outside of tennis.

In terms of I guess the camaraderie, you know, you girls have done a great job of really bonding this week, because I don't think they have really spent that kind of time together on and off the court.

You know, the banter has been great. It just brings the

dynamic of the team has just been very different this week, which I think has helped in terms of players cracking on with it and delivering the performances that we needed today.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports