

# Billie Jean King Cup

Sunday, 5 November 2023

Canada

Captain Heidi El Tabakh

Leylah Fernandez

Rebecca Marino

Eugenie Bouchard

Marina Stakusic

Gabriela Dabrowski

Press Conference - Transcribed remotely  
from audio only



have a great support staff, and the girls here are super amazing, super positive. They always bring out the best in me.

Also is the pride of playing for my country. My dad, who's a football player, he's always said the biggest pride of any athlete is to represent their country and to have the country's name on their back. Every time I step on court, I always just want to fight, bring out the best, be the best possible version of myself and give Team Canada a chance to win the tie.

## Q. Eugenie, how excited are you for this week?

EUGENIE BOUCHARD: Yeah, very excited. I think it's always special playing for your country. I've done it many times over my career. I always enjoy having the support of teammates, because normally we play an individual sport and we don't have that. I think it's unique. I'm happy the tennis calendar has a week like this a year or a couple weeks a year.

I'm just here to be part of the team and play as well as I can and support as far as I can, as well.

## Q. For Rebecca, you're going to play Spain in Spain. Maybe how does it change...

REBECCA MARINO: Yeah, when I saw that we were put in the round robin with Spain, particularly because the competition is, they are the host nation. I was very excited, actually, because you want to have a great competition and good camaraderie for your team.

We're up for the challenge, I think. That's why we compete. We compete for moments like this. Excited for the fans and for that sort of thing. I think we are up for it and we are quite excited.

## Q. Eugenie, just wanted to pick up on the fact that it's been five years I think since your last Billie Jean King Cup tie.

EUGENIE BOUCHARD: No, I played in 2020. I just didn't play a match because I got injured the day before. But I

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. A question for the captain. The group seems to be very tight on paper. (Indiscernible.) You have players in your squad who can perform very well in doubles, not just singles. Do you think that this can be a crucial factor for your team to succeed?**

CAPTAIN HEIDI EL TABAKH: I might ask you to repeat the question because I think I missed a little bit of the first part.

**Q. Yeah, sure. Your group seems to be very tight on paper. Your team includes players who perform really well in doubles, not just in singles. Do you think that it's such a tight group this can be a crucial factor for your team to win?**

CAPTAIN HEIDI EL TABAKH: Yeah, absolutely. Anything can happen. It might come down to the decider doubles. If it does, then we're ready.

This is a pretty tough competition. It's pretty even. I think all teams are going to go out there and play their best. We expect that, and we'll be ready for it.

**Q. Leylah, I think you said in the past playing for Canada always brings out the best in you. Why do you feel that is?**

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: You know, I think, one, I'm always excited to be part of a team, especially from Canada. We



was on the team. Everyone seems to have forgotten that, even my captain, so it's okay.

**Q. Could you just reflect on kind of the rise that you have witnessed of Canadian tennis over that time with obviously Leylah, Bianca, and just whether you saw it coming or just how great it's been to kind of observe that and now kind of to be part of the fold again?**

EUGENIE BOUCHARD: Tennis has grown a lot in Canada. We've seen it over the last 15, 10, 5 years. It's been an honor to be a part of that wave and see to it continue with the other generation as well.

I would say it's the second-most popular sport now in Canada after hockey. Nothing will beat that. But at least we have the No. 2 spot. I hear so many stories of tennis clubs and summer camps being full.

I was just training in Montreal, and I could not get a court to practice on over the weekend. It was insane.

That makes me so happy, and I hope it keeps growing and kids keep picking up tennis or any sport for that matter. I think that's the most important thing. It's amazing.

**Q. Off the back of what Eugenie said there, how big in Canada it would be for victory in the Billie Jean King Cup Finals if you could pull it out this week, do you think that would get a big reaction?**

CAPTAIN HEIDI EL TABAKH: I think that's the ultimate goal. I think that's everyone's goal on this team to win the Billie Jean King Cup. You know, we believe that we can achieve it.

We were hoping to follow in Davis Cup footsteps. Big inspiration to us. I trust my players. I know they are going to give it 100% on court. We are competing against the big nations of teams and players in the world, so it's not going to be easy, but we have earned our spot and we believe that we could do it. It would mean a lot for us. It would mean a lot for tennis in Canada and mean a lot for Canada as well.

**Q. Marina, how are you enjoying being in this environment and being alongside your esteemed colleagues?**

MARINA STAKUSIC: It's obviously really exciting for me to be here, to play my first Billie Jean King Cup. It's always been a goal of mine to play in this event. Just being on a team with all these girls who are all super nice and welcoming is really exciting for me.

I'm looking forward to seeing how the week goes. I know it's going to be a great experience for me.

**Q. This is the Billie Jean King Cup. 50 years ago there was the famous game of 'Battle of the Sexes'. If anyone wants to answer how did Billie Jean King inspire you as a female tennis player.**

CANADIAN PLAYER: I think we all have a way to answer that. I remember when I first came on tour we had to do our rookie hours, and that included a power hour with Billie Jean King. I was just so impressed and in awe of meeting her. What's she's done is trailblazing, her along with the Original 9, to create a tour like this for women's sport, and to be a leading support for women professionally is really incredible. She's still breaking a lot of barriers, not just in tennis, now she's supporting women's sport as a whole. I think we can all aspire to be like her currently and in our future.

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