

Billie Jean King Cup

Tuesday, 7 November 2023

Team Slovenia

Kaja Juvan

Press Conference



K. JUVAN/A. Tomljanovic

6-4, 6-1

Team Australia - 0

Team Slovenia - 1

THE MODERATOR: Congrats on your win. We will take questions in English.

Q. Historic victory for your country. Can you talk about what that means to you to be the player to kind of deliver that first win at the Finals?

KAJA JUVAN: Yeah, I mean, I always love to play for my country. I think that it's always a little bit stressful when you're the first one. You really want to perform well.

I think that, as always, the team effort and everything is giving me a lot of motivation and a lot of energy. So I'm just really excited that not only we're here but that we are actually trying to, like, do really well here (smiling).

Q. Can you just talk about the match today and some of the crucial moments? Seemed like the start of the second set there were a couple of really long games which both went your way. What made the difference today?

KAJA JUVAN: I mean, I think, first of all, the situation was a little bit tricky, because we didn't know who we're gonna play, I'm gonna play, until around one hour before, because that's when they announce the teams. So we had to prepare a little bit fast.

I think that obviously she's a really great player. She also performed for her country many times very successfully.

I think that throughout the whole match I started to move a little bit better, like, tactically I tried to sort of stay with my pattern. I think that I felt confident that as long as I'm there and running that I can do it physically. I know that she's recovering after an injury, so I had the feeling like it's one

of my advantages maybe that I can just try to sort of outrun her maybe long term.

Q. A couple of things. First of all, as a team, were you surprised to see Ajla on the Australia team? Because she's barely played this year. Secondly, just tell me about the court. You have obviously been practicing on it, but now you have played a match. Is it fast, is it slow, is it gritty? How is the court?

KAJA JUVAN: I think we were more surprised that she was playing, considering that she wasn't playing many matches lately. But, you know, I think that's one of the interesting things about the whole competition, like, you don't exactly know who you're going to play, if they have more players. For us was a little bit more predictable (smiling).

The surface, it's interesting. It's a little bit like this wood is underneath, so it's a little bit, like, hollow. So the ball -- I would say it's not so fast, but it is low. So maybe it's not bouncing as much as, like, in Australian Open or some other hard courts.

I think also it's a little bit more special because it's so dark, you know. It's inside, under the tent, so it's just more under the lights, so when you come out it's, like, sunny and it's a whole different atmosphere.

So I think I need to get used to it. You need to get used to it with the eyes, with the crowd, and I think that also after a while you get used to it more than at the beginning.

Q. You talked about being here to compete and showing that obviously with your win. Do you feel like as a team, yeah, you have something to prove? Is that motivating you this week?

KAJA JUVAN: I think that we always sort of been considered like an underdog anywhere. Also, I would say just coming from a small country, people don't sort of expect maybe -- and it's normal, because the conditions are a little bit worse than maybe in some big country that has a more established system.



I would say that I'm really proud to come from Slovenia. Like there is only 2 million people of us. And I think as a country we are doing exceptionally well in sports, I think everywhere.

So we always have a sort of extra motivation when we come somewhere. You know, people sort of wrote us off already in China last year. I mean, in China, against China last year. We were also underdogs against Romania.

So I think just coming here is sort of like, Okay, let's show them a little bit why we are also here.

It doesn't always go your way, but I think that through the matches we have shown that me and Tamara and then the team supporting us that we belong here.

Q. You have got an incredible record in this competition. Personally I think you have won 10 of your last 11 matches. A lot of players talk about how this competition feels different to playing week in, week out on the tour. Can you sort of put your finger on what it is when you're on the court that is different? Is it the crowd, is it the teammates, is it not thinking about rankings? Just sort of how does all of that help you sort of perform so well?

KAJA JUVAN: I think for me, one of the most, like, amazing things that I feel when I play is just the support from the team. Usually the coach is not on the court. You have, like, one or two people.

And like I said, coming from a small country, just to feel like there is so many of us there, today the crowd was also, there was a lot of Slovenians in the crowd. So I think every time, like, you get a good point or you get another win, like, it's a completely different feeling, because also people around you are always there for you, always supporting you.

I think it's a little bit this sort of team competition, you know, like if you learn how to win together and lose together and you still stay together, then I think you can come really far in the competition.

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