

Billie Jean King Cup

Friday, 10 November 2023

Team France

Captain Julien Benneteau

Kristina Mladenovic

Caroline Garcia

Press Conference

GARCIA-MLADENOVIC/Niemeier-Siegemund

5-7, 6-3, 10-1

Team France - 3

Team Germany - 0

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Team France.

Q. Question for Kristina. Not the outcome that France would have wanted this week, but could I just ask how pleasing it is to finish on a positive note?

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Yeah, of course it's not easy. It's a bittersweet feeling, because we had the high goals and expectations. In this format, you know, it was very close unfortunately against Italy. Not easy to go out there on the court to play a rubber that doesn't count. We knew yesterday after they win that we were out of the contest.

But, yeah, we did the job. You know, it was also strange scenario with the singles, especially the match just before ours with the unfortunate retirement of Tatjana. So a little bit mix of emotions, and it's not easy to prepare in this kind of, you know, scenarios.

But just to speak about our performance, it was again a great test. Like I said, not easy to come out there. Also a great team in front of us that showed us lots of variation in the first set. I'm glad we found together the solutions and the great game. A little bit similar like our first match the other day. I think we improved throughout the match.

Like we spoke to each other, I mean, fine, it doesn't count, but we always want to show a great example, a great professionalism, and a great game and to represent France. Doesn't matter, count or doesn't count, the match. We have those values. I think it's important to represent at the highest possible way the country. I think that's what we



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did, and of course it's very nice to finish on the win for us.

Q. Clara, I know she's played for France before, but how impressed were you by her today, going out and playing so well? For a young player, how impressed were you with Clara?

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC: Yeah, not many matches she had under her belt. Like I said, for sure not easy to come out and play that match. I think she handled her nerves overall well and was a better player today and got the win.

You know, we went on that tie with the goal as well to win it. So maybe doesn't count anymore here, but we have been told that any win is important in terms of world rankings, and that's how we want to, you know, stay up there. We want to show that we always give the best and we want to be up there with the best teams over the years.

Q. Julien, you had some strong words about the format at the end of this tie today. Could you explain the changes that you would like to see to the format?

CAPTAIN JULIEN BENNETEAU: The fact that you have two ties today on center court for nothing, it's not possible for World Cup of Tennis, as they call it. You cannot have that.

So if you don't change the format and you stay with 12 teams, group of 3, the first 2 should qualify and play quarterfinals. Like this, every match will count.

In sports, the main thing is that even you play it, like, straight eliminatory, if you do a group stage, one defeat shouldn't be eliminatory. For example, World Cup in football and rugby, you can lose one game in group and still qualify and go very far in the competition.

In this format with three teams per group, you cannot qualify if you lose one match, or it's extremely rare. Last year it happened, but the main thing is that you avoid the matches. You should not have to play for nothing when it's a World Cup. I think. But once again, this is to the ITF to think very well and to manage that.

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Q. A question to either Caroline or Kristina. You have been part of the team for so many years now. What are the positive takeaways in terms of building chemistry? Within the group, of course you couldn't make it through the group stage, but what are the positive takeaways being with Clara, with Varvara, building chemistry for the next year?

CAROLINE GARCIA: Yeah, it's nice to see some new faces, and it's also part of the sport, you know, like generation go away and some new ones are coming. Sometimes you have a mixed at one point.

It's very good to see Clara coming and winning the match of today, tough conditions, like Kristina and Julien said. It's not easy to come when you know that it's dead.

Yeah, it's definitely good. You can learn some new stuff. Everyone has some different kind of spirit, different kind of vibes. Varvara also come from a different country, so she bring something different. It's good to be able to discover and to bring something to each other.

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