

# Billie Jean King Cup

Thursday, 14 November 2024

Team Japan

Captain Ai Sugiyama

Press Conference



AOYAMA-HOZUMI/Niculescu-Ruse

6-1, 7-5

Team Japan - 2

Team Romania - 1

THE MODERATOR: We will start the press conference with the captain. First of all, congratulations. A tough tie, but great victory. How do you feel?

CAPTAIN AI SUGIYAMA: I feel great (smiling). All the girls are playing really well. Yeah, even though we lost the first match, she fought so hard. She put everything she could. And then Ena obviously play really well.

I mean, doubles can go three sets if the second set was really tight, but yeah, they play really right and smart. Yeah, they fight till the end. So we put really great energy up there, and I felt, even though it could go either way, but I was really happy what they did, their performance.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

**Q. Congratulations.**

CAPTAIN AI SUGIYAMA: Thank you.

**Q. I was just wondering if you could talk us through the decision today to play Nao in the singles rather than Uchijima, what your thought process was.**

CAPTAIN AI SUGIYAMA: Yeah, it was a tough decision. Of course Moyuka has been playing really well this year, and her ranking is nearly top 50.

But we had a long flight, like, close to 24 hours. When we got here, it's a tough condition, indoor as well, and the lights. She had a little bit of pain here and there. It wasn't perfect. So Nao had a great preparation.

Moyuka tried her best, as well, and maybe quarterfinal she has chance to play, because even though it doesn't go as

how she wants, but she tried to do everything she could. So we'll see another two days what's gonna happen. Then, yeah, three girls can play singles, so we have more option. But yeah, that's a tough decision, but it was right, I think.

**Q. I think you have now won all eight of your ties as captain. How much are you enjoying this role?**

CAPTAIN AI SUGIYAMA: Oh, this is great, yeah. To get here is already, like, you know, was one of my goals to be in the Finals, playing Malaga, but yeah, today all the players, all the staff putting a great effort, not only being here, just, you know, every day work. I keep in touch all the players and staffs, and they try everything they could to get here.

Yeah, today's different when we play individually and with the team. Yeah, it was for me when I was playing, it was tough for me to play team. I put too much pressure. But these days, the girls are, you know, dealing with the pressure, and they play really well tennis. I'm so happy.

**Q. I think you spoke about the doubles in your first answer. I just wanted to ask you about Shibahara in the singles. I think it's her best win by ranking. What was your view of that match?**

CAPTAIN AI SUGIYAMA: Yeah, Ena played doubles in the past against Colombia and against Kazakhstan. She gave us a great record for doubles.

But now, especially this year, she's trying her singles, work on more singles, and her ranking jump up really high, close to top 100 now. Yeah, I believe she can play better tennis, and then she has potential to be top 100, top 50, top 20.

So this was just on the way to top 150, but she really willing to play singles. Since Naomi pulled out from singles, she was the best player in our country. When I ask her, when I offer her, and she was happy to be in the team.

So I'm happy and she was so happy that she was in the team and then playing for singles. So it was, yeah, good



experience for her and it's gonna, yeah, good confidence for her, as well.

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