

Billie Jean King Cup

Monday, 15 September 2025

Team Japan

Captain Ai Sugiyama

Moyuka Uchijima

Ena Shibahara

Eri Hozumi

Shuko Aoyama

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, Team Japan. Question for the captain.

Ai, what are your thoughts on this week?

CAPTAIN AI SUGIYAMA: Well, we are ready. We are really looking forward to it. Well, actually this is second time being in BJK Finals. Last year we were in Malaga. This is, yeah, second time. Two years in a row in the Final 8. Yeah, we are really looking forward to.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Moyuka, can you talk a bit about your opponents for the quarterfinals, GB, what you are expecting from them, what matchups you predict could happen and how you've been preparing.

MOYUKA UCHIJIMA: Yeah, I mean, obviously Great Britain is a strong team. Even though Emma is not in the team, still they have a really good singles player. I mean, every team for qualifying the Final I think is a good team.

We're really happy to be back in the Finals. Actually it's the same five players we play last year, so we are ready to get the revenge.

Yeah, we are having a great preparation. Just going to do our best and have fun.

Q. Ena, we talk about last year being the first year you were in the Finals. What learnings have you taken from that week as a team? How are you going to use those learnings this week?

ENA SHIBAHARA: Yeah, for sure. Last year I feel like the

biggest thing we learned that we can trust each other, we have each other's back. In whatever situation that we're in, we're just going to believe in each other and do the best that we can.

Q. Shuko, you've been part of this team for a long time. Your record in doubles is pretty formidable. What is the best part about being in this team? What's changed over the years for you?

SHUKO AOYAMA: The biggest thing is captain is Ai Sugiyama. She is very good person. I think we are very happy to spend with her.

Yeah, so teamwork is very good. We want to try do our best this week. Yeah, I really, like, love tennis. I'm very happy with younger person. Also they are inspiring me, yeah, all the time (smiling). Also they inspire me, I'm very grateful.

Q. You seem to have a great team unity. What kind of things do you do during these weeks in your downtime in terms of team bonding? Any activities, small things you do together to keep that tight-knit feeling?

ENA SHIBAHARA: Well, we love to hang out with each other. We know each other really well. Some things we do are, like, card games. I don't know. We just got some little Labubus. We're going to open them later (laughter).

We're very light-hearted people. She likes to sing. I like listening to her sing. I don't know. We're just a fun team.

Q. Moyuka, what did you learn, what kind of skills you grew from the tournaments this year? What are some of the new things or experiences you're going to bring to this team?

MOYUKA UCHIJIMA: Yeah, this year, especially in Madrid, I think the biggest thing was I could trust myself more. I mean, we all working a lot behind the scenes.



So yeah, I just had to trust what I have been doing on the practice court. I think I was able to show that on court. I think that was the biggest thing I could do in Madrid.

But yeah, I mean, my season has been up and down. I got injured a little bit. Haven't played well in the past months.

But I'm really happy to be back on this wonderful team. Yeah, everybody trusting each other. Hope we can go further than last year.

Q. Last year you won your first title. You paired up with a Chinese player. How do you feel with a Chinese player, but this time you are going against the Chinese team?

MOYUKA UCHIJIMA: Yeah, I mean, I been training in China six years now. I played with Guo Hanyu. We train in the same academy. I had the chance to play with her. She is a great player. I'm really happy to share the court with her.

Yeah, like, I mean, I've been here for six years, so it's kind of like my second home. I'm excited to play in front of the crowd and let's see what's going to happen.

Q. What is your plan for the China season?

MOYUKA UCHIJIMA: First of all, this Billie Jean. Afterwards we are going to play Beijing and Wuhan. Yeah, just the normal Asian Swing. We are excited, so let's see.

Q. What is your comment about this Chinese team? You may see them during the tournament. How do you feel? Do you have pressure?

MOYUKA UCHIJIMA: I mean, yes, I do, for sure. Yeah, I mean, every team has every strong points. But I think the biggest thing for us is we all, I mean, Naomi, unfortunately she got injured and she is not here, but still we are strong in singles and doubles.

So yeah, of course other country also have probably the best girls. I think we still can play against them. Yeah, we are really excited to play.

Q. Coach, Naomi not being able to be here, what has she told you, bring words to you guys to cheer you up?

CAPTAIN AI SUGIYAMA: Actually, she got injured. She really wanted to come here to compete. Yeah, she has to recover from the injury first.

Well, I hope she's cheering for us (smiling). I haven't

talked to her much. She was too disappointed because she got injured. But I'm sure she's, yeah, cheering for us.

Q. She had a lot of new things coming up the whole season. She's getting back. How do you see her?

CAPTAIN AI SUGIYAMA: I'm happy to see her really doing well. Runner-up in Montreal, semis in US Open. Most important thing, she's enjoying playing again. She's more relaxed. Seems like she's relieved from all the pressure, I think.

Being a mother, her priority maybe change a little bit even before she was, you know, dealing with the pressure. Now she's more relaxed on court. She's performing really well. I'm happy to see her really doing well.

Q. Moyuka, can you tell us how you feel about Naomi during this season?

MOYUKA UCHIJIMA: Yeah, I mean, I was watching her on TV since I was kid. Yeah, she inspired us a lot, not only me, I think everybody sitting here.

Yeah, we are really happy to see she's back at her level, giving us more motivation to kind of catch up with her, play in the same tournaments.

Yeah, I mean, now she's injured a bit, so I hope she recover well. Good luck for her to the rest of the Asian swings.

Q. The follow-up about the Labubus. Is the plan for them to be the team mascot? Will they be coming out on court with you?

ENA SHIBAHARA: We haven't thought that far, but I think it would be fun if we all put them on our bags and we show them off (laughter).

Yeah, we'll each open one and see if we get the one we want.

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