

Billie Jean King Cup: USA vs Belgium

Saturday, April 13, 2024

Orlando, Florida, USA

USTA National Campus

Team USA

Captain Lindsay Davenport

Taylor Townsend

Caroline Dolehide

Press Conference

DOLEHIDE-TOWNSEND/Zimmermann-Benoit

6-3, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Lindsay, couldn't have gone better. Do you feel you have now learned? You said it was a learning experience.

CAPTAIN DAVENPORT: I think anytime you go into something for the first week, you're going to learn a lot. One lesson was I just assumed someone like Taylor knew the format. I don't play doubles on the first day. I was like, Oh, gosh. She only played in the one-day event. I'm trying to learn stuff like that, as well.

Honestly, again, these ladies were amazing. Everything I wanted in terms of teamwork, being together, a lot of funny stuff. It was really great.

But then to see them last night, as I told you, to battle through conditions that weren't perfect for either of my players, then to see Jess, I told her at 6-2, 5-Love today, This is a lot more enjoyable for me (laughter).

Honestly, it was fun spending time with these ladies, getting to know them. Some I didn't know that well before I got here. I was really pleased with how this 'first week' went.

Q. How do you feel the two of you gel on the court? Taylor, we thought you were going to play with Maddie. Caroline, you came in. How do you feel your games complement each other?



CAROLINE DOLEHIDE: Yeah, I think we're both very powerful players. We kind of expected to play our games, be really aggressive. Like Taylor said on day one, we wanted to go out there and dominate. That's what it felt like we did. That's how I felt about our partnership out there.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Yeah, I mean, I knew we were going to play well together. Especially it's kind of tough for the other team because after being up 3-1, the pressure's off. Me and Caroline were going into it super loose and super free. That's a problem for anyone on the other side of the net.

We were out there just trying things and having fun. You always should have fun. When there's an extra layer of pressure, sometimes it can stifle some things.

I knew we were going to play well. For me personally, I was super relaxed, willing to try some things. I knew we were going to take care of business, honestly.

CAROLINE DOLEHIDE: Confidence out there was no problem. I loved it.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: I was like, Let's wrap this up so we can go get some coffee and something else. We got some ice cream waiting for us, acai bowls. There's a whole mess in our team coolers.

I was excited to go on the same side of the court as Caroline. We haven't played together since World TeamTennis in 2020. It's been a long time, but I knew we were going to play well.

Q. Could you take us through last night, all the excitement. I could tell you were so excited when you came off the court. A wild night. What conversations did you have as a team? How do you transition from that into today?

CAPTAIN DAVENPORT: It finished so late last night, so we definitely had a team meeting here on-site. We were on the bus on the way back all together trying to get our plan.



We had some kind of decisions to have to make together as a team as far as what today was going to look like. You have to go over all the different scenarios, which is another thing that I'm learning, not comfortable with. Try to get clarity with that.

We had a couple of injuries. We were trying to see how those would be. Everybody here was, like, on the same page. This is the plan.

The other challenge is you're never 100% sure who plays for the other team, so we talked about the different scenarios that could happen there. Honestly nothing fazes these ladies. We got you. It was basically the team theme of the week.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: For me personally, it was important for me as a teammate to recap the effort level from everyone on the team, from Jess and Emma playing out on the court, grinding two hours plus, then for everyone on the bench, the support. Basically 90% of the crowd left after Jess' match. We had to bring the energy for our players and our team. We got the drums and the bells and everything.

We didn't feel that energy on the court. We all came together and said, Hey, we're going to bring the energy no matter what. I think that that really translated, especially to Emma, because we saw her game kind of change midway through the second set.

For me as a teammate, it was important for me to recap and make sure everyone felt acknowledged in terms of how high the effort level was, the commitment to seeing things through and being fluid when it wasn't ideal conditions.

Things completely changed from the beginning of the match to the end. It was semi-warm, then it was freezing by the time Emma was done. Not ideal conditions for us and our players, but we were able to get through it.

For me personally, it was important for me to let everyone know, Way to go, I'm really proud of you, thank you for what you put out there today because it wasn't easy, it wasn't ideal, but we got through it.

We were able to see the difference today from yesterday. I mean, honestly, it looked like completely different players from last night to today. For me personally, that was what was important for me to acknowledge the effort for my team, for everybody that was involved, both who played and who didn't.

Q. What happens with all of your match kits and

practice kits that you amass throughout the season? Do you keep them?

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: What are you talking about? What we play in these tournaments?

Q. Throughout the tour from your sponsors, whatever clothes you get.

CAROLINE DOLEHIDE: Donating, sending it out to fans. I have two sisters, so give it to them. What do you do?

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: I don't have a sponsor, so I keep everything that I have 'cause I spend my hard-earned money on my clothes. My pile keeps going like that.

CAROLINE DOLEHIDE: I don't keep that stuff in my house.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: I have to buy 10 lululemon dresses. I don't want to give that away. What if I want to run it back a couple seasons later?

Maybe I should work on that. I'm going to look internally and figure out why I do that. Maybe I have a little bit of a hoarding issue. That's not something we need to talk about in press at BJK Cup.

Q. Who do you donate to, Caroline?

CAROLINE DOLEHIDE: I've donated stuff to foundations just locally. Goodwill is a very easy one here in Lake Nona.

Q. Literally drop it off at Goodwill?

CAROLINE DOLEHIDE: Yeah. A lot of fans at World TeamTennis in the past have wanted a ton of my jersey-type things that say my last name on the back. I just send them out to them.

The visors and stuff to kids. A lot of kids love those things.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: My dad is executive director of athletics of Clayton County. I put together a big box for, like, the kids. Honestly, I don't really donate so much clothes, but I donate a lot of my racquets, like over 200 racquets.

CAROLINE DOLEHIDE: Tons of racquets.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: I might not donate the stuff I have now. Honestly, I have sisters, too. I let my family go through stuff, Take what you want. The stuff I know I'm not wearing I'll give away or donate.



I've donated more racquets, equipment, things that people can really use and make a difference.

CAROLINE DOLEHIDE: We're both from Chicago. Growing up, we've seen it all. There's a lot of homeless people in the city. When I was growing up, even when we just started playing tennis, my dad would take our extra shoes and bring me downtown to give them to the homeless people. I've have that ingrained in me since I was a kid. That's kind of what we do.

Q. You have a legendary captain. She doesn't want to hear me say that. Talk about her captaining style. What did you love about having Lindsay Davenport as your captain?

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Honestly, I had so much fun. I've talked to Lindsay quite a bit, but never in this capacity. It's always been pretty casual, very complimentary, but in passing or even Tennis Channel. Completely different environment.

For me, I really enjoyed it. It's always fun to be able to experience a first because we're all kind of figuring each other out.

The one thing that I really like, for me personally, I got here a little bit under the weather. Lindsay was like, Hey, do what you need. There was never any pressure to practice, hit. You need to take care of yourself. It was always, like, putting you first, putting you first, putting you first as the player.

Also, like, it was a mission for me to pick her brain and find out kind of the certain things that she would think or experiences she felt being a No. 1, having played in these ties and being in this position. It's really something that is really extraordinary to be able to spend a week and time with someone of her caliber, so...

For me, I wanted to just pick her brain and kind of see how she thought. She's very complimentary of me. She's like, I just don't understand some of the stuff you do. I could never do it. It was super funny because, like, I'm trying to ask, What did you do? What did you do? She's like, Taylor, I couldn't do what you do. I can't tell you.

It's super cool sometimes to have them tell you they don't know. That's something you really don't experience a lot in this atmosphere. It's a lot of people who are very matter of fact. It's a lot of, like, telling you what to do, do this, do that, give you direction.

That was a first for me of someone, like, of her status being

like, No idea. Don't know. Can't tell you (laughter). You don't really experience that very often, especially on tour. Players look to their coaches for, like, direction and advice. It was really cool. I personally enjoyed it very much.

The one thing I really enjoy about these weeks is that, like, you really kind of gain an understanding on a different level. I feel like I've made new friends. With Lindsay, I'll pop over if she's sitting in player dining, I'm going to sit down and talk to her, whereas before it may have been hi and bye. Now I'll take the time to go and sit and talk with her, have that comfort level. The same with everybody on the team.

It's really cool from a camaraderie perspective, like you really feel like you make friends, just understand people from a different perspective than you do when you're on tour. I said three words to Emma this whole entire time before this week. I've only said three words to her, which is, Hey, how are you? To see her, get a chance to know who she is, see her personality, I'm like, You are awesome.

I really enjoyed it. It's been awesome to play alongside Lindsay. She's fantastic on the bench. I hope that I can continue to be a part of this team and represent her any way that I can.

Q. What do you love about being coached by Lindsay Davenport?

CAROLINE DOLEHIDE: I'm going to piggyback off of that. We're never going to take this for granted. Lindsay is such a role model to all of us. She's been a role model our whole lives. Just to have somebody choose us to be a part of this team means so much.

American tennis is extremely strong right now. So to be a part of a group of women, strong women, who just have a great attitude every single day, and who just raise the level every single time we're all together, it means so much.

The advice that we've gotten from Lindsay, I'm sure we're all going to use it in the future, for sure. I was out there practicing serves a little bit extra every single day because Lindsay had one of the best serves out there. That gives me a lot of confidence to go out there and go after it and keep working on that.

Yeah, I've just enjoyed this entire experience and I can't wait for the next time.

Q. Lindsay, what does this mean to you to have these incredible ladies? Talk about what your takeaways are from this experience.

CAPTAIN DAVENPORT: Yeah, it's been an awesome experience. It was a little overwhelming last year when I just had my first conversation with the USTA. I can't do this. I've got four kids. They came back and they're like, We really want to make this work. I was super happy about that.

It was never not about the players, if that makes sense. Being on court with players is something I love. Six players here, God, I wish I could give everyone more time. It was hard to balance practices, there were some meetings and stuff. I think I would look to schedule days differently. Like I said, it was a learning week for me also.

But everybody was, like, an immediate yes, which was so exciting for me. I really got the team I wanted. I did talk to Coco Gauff's team at the beginning of the year, and they indicated it wasn't an option for this a long time ago, maybe six months ago when I was first announced. I knew for a long time who I was really looking to get together. Everybody said yes. It was amazing.

To see them also work together, the camaraderie, that's what I wanted. I wanted to have fun, wanted everybody to learn to work together. They all did. It was no problem.

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