

United Cup

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Perth, Western Australia, Australia

USA

Taylor Fritz

Jessica Pegula

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Team USA, at least part of the team that's here today in Perth. Taylor, defending champion here at the United Cup. How does it feel coming in with that target on your back? What are your goals for round 2.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, it was awesome obviously winning it last year but I think this year with the format change, it makes it a lot tougher for our team. The format last year was in favor for teams with a lot of depth. So, you know, even if Jess and I didn't perform, we still had, you know, our No. 2s that we felt very confident in all the matchups. Definitely tougher this year, but we're ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: Jess, just your thoughts about being back at the United Cup and being in Perth?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it's exciting to be here. I've never been here before. So it's not many times you get to see a new city on tour so that's exciting.

Kind of sad though because we're missing half our team. I feel like it's not the same. Like Taylor said, it's a different format this year. To be honest, it's kind of sad. I don't know.

I'm excited though. We're ready to get going. But I do feel a little, yeah, kind of depressed half the team isn't here. We had such a fun year last year. But yeah, different format, totally different this year, and hopefully we can still get it done.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

JESSICA PEGULA: Not yet, but we still have this group chat from a year ago. I'm sure we'll put a couple things in there to get the memories going. Maddie said if we needed any good vibes to FaceTime her any time. Maybe we'll take her up on that this week.

No, not much yet. I think they're kind of upset they're not here so I don't really know if they want to talk to us. At



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least Foe was.

Q. Taylor, I guess you mentioned there's more pressure on both of you this time around. Do you embrace that or how do you go about handling that?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I mean, like I said, the format last year is just better for Team USA overall, but we're still here to win it, and I say we still have a really still a really strong team. I just think we're going to see a lot more matches come down to the mixed doubles, and that's something that not a lot of the players I guess have a lot of experience in. So, you know, the pressure is going to show in those moments and it's going to make for some really exciting matches, I think.

We're ready to go, for sure.

Q. Looking beyond the group stage, who do you think are some of the big dangers in this tournament?

TAYLOR FRITZ: It's so tough to tell, because, I mean, obviously, like, you think of every team, I think Poland is really strong. They were strong last year, and I think this format makes them even stronger now.

Obviously Iga and Hubi in singles and then, you know, you manage to get one of them in singles, that's a tough mixed doubles team. Hubi is a really good doubles player.

They're tough, but then there are so many teams that maybe just have one person that's really strong, and the way the format is now one person can honestly carry a team.

Q. How much are you looking forward to your battle with Alex? I know it's not your next one up but looking ahead to that one.

TAYLOR FRITZ: It will be a fun one. Playing Demon in Australia is going to be a tough one, for sure. I feel like he always brings a lot of energy and plays really well, especially at this time of the year.

Q. What have you made of his rise over the past two or three years or so?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I mean, I think it was pretty consistent. I think last year was a big jump up for him. I feel like it was coming, because he's always been, competes so



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well and so solid, and just a guy that you expect to beat who he's supposed to beat all the time.

I think it was coming. You know, I'm not too surprised with how good of a year he had last year. And when we were younger, I mean, he absolutely owned me (smiling). Took me a long time before I was able to beat him.

Q. At what stage did he stop owning you?

TAYLOR FRITZ: He got me on the most recent one, but originally he was, if I'm not mistaken, I think he was 3-0 on me, and I just, like, not even close. Then I think I brought back maybe the last three, and then he got me last time (smiling).

I wouldn't say "owned" anymore. (Smiling.)

Q. Jess, the matchup with Ajla, what have you made of her return from injury and how much are you looking forward to that battle?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it's nice to see her back playing well. Obviously she had all that momentum after beating Serena and having a great year, and then to see her get sidelined by injury again is always tough. She lives in Florida pretty close to me. Yeah, we actually were supposed to practice a few weeks ago before she came here but we got rained out so it didn't happen.

It's nice to see her back playing well. To me, she's a top-20 player, for sure. She's really solid and not really much weakness anywhere. She's a really great competitor.

Does everything, honestly, really, really well. It's going to be tough. I know she hasn't played that much the past year or so, but I know she just won a tournament, and that does a lot for confidence. So I'm sure she's going to be very confident, especially playing down here.

Q. What sort of goals have you set for yourself for the coming year?

JESSICA PEGULA: My goals? I don't know. I feel like I can't believe we're already starting the year again. I feel like I just ended the year, which I did. I don't even know if I've even looked ahead to goals, haven't even had enough time.

I think obviously to start the year well to get some matches here I think is really important for the whole year, and to get that momentum going. So I think just starting the year off right, trying to have, you know, a good, positive mentality, knowing I've had some great last couple of years, and it's going to be even tougher now to keep that going. Just playing one match at a time I think has worked really well for me.

Last year I had a lot of really big wins, big tournament wins, too. Hopefully I can just carry that experience throughout the year.

Q. Obviously this year complicates a little bit with the Olympics in the summer. I'm kind of curious from both of your perspectives being top players playing the schedules that you already have and then obviously having this additionally, how much does that change this year at all, and how much do you prioritize it, or do you not prioritize it? I know tennis players, everyone sees the Olympics a little bit differently.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, for me, it's honestly affecting a lot, because it's affecting more weeks than just the Olympics for me. Because basically I do want to play, but I'm forced to go play now a Davis Cup tie after Australia in, I believe it's in Lithuania, when I played so much last year I really would love that week off. But I have to play to be allowed to play Olympics, which I think is kind of, I don't know about that rule --

JESSICA PEGULA: Should have played it last year, this past year --

TAYLOR FRITZ: I was planning on playing but the team didn't qualify for Malaga. They told me they had it, so... (Laughter.)

Yeah, it's unfortunate that it's going to cost me an extra travel week, and it's also a bit inconvenient, you know, going on clay, then going back to such an important part of the season for American players, especially.

But for me, I just think it's important to kind of get one Olympic experience down, because the next Olympics I'll be 30 and in LA and it might be my last chance and it might be -- obviously in LA, kind of feel like a home one, might be my best chance to do something. I think that having one Olympics experience before that might help me. I'm kind of, that's the way I'm kind of looking at it.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, I played Tokyo and it was a COVID Olympics so I definitely didn't get a real experience.

You know, this might be my last Olympics. I don't know if I'm going to make it another four years from now and also qualify. That seems very far away right now, so I'm not planning on that.

So yeah, I think it's important for me. Especially Coco and I have been playing really well together. I've been playing mixed with Austin, he's No. 1 in the world, having a great year. To me it's super important.

I played a ton last year. Doesn't really affect me that much this year, maybe a little bit with the scheduling. But

at the same time, I think it's important, and at least for me at this point in my career, it definitely means a lot. I'm excited to go and get a real experience, and hopefully have a great chance as well in all the events.

Yeah, I'm looking forward to it. And I already qualified.

TAYLOR FRITZ: You're not going to play mixed with me? You said "Austin." You're not playing mixed with me?

JESSICA PEGULA: I don't know.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Start looking for another partner then.

JESSICA PEGULA: We'll see how our United Cup. It's only one team this year, I heard. There's only one mixed team. That's what I heard. But I heard, I don't know if this is true, it's a mixed team but you can alternate partners.

TAYLOR FRITZ: That's really weird.

JESSICA PEGULA: They were trying to do that. That's what, Bob Bryan told me that, yeah. We could all play mixed and if we medal we all get a medal if you played. Makes it kind of interesting.

TAYLOR FRITZ: I thought mixed was going to be my best chance at a medal.

JESSICA PEGULA: We'll see how that team choice goes.

Q. Jess, putting aside goals and what you're wanting to try and do, putting all that to one side, what do you feel you need to do to move up yet another step as far as rankings, et cetera, and keep it up there on a consistent basis, right through the year?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, pretty much what I've been doing. That's what I've been doing for the last two years. So I think if I keep doing that, I'll be good.

Again, when you're talking top 5, like, the margins are so small. Winning one 1000, going deep in a slam or winning a slam, it's very, very, very small margins. To me, you can't really overthink those things because when you try to overthink it so much it can definitely backfire. When sometimes what you're doing and the path you're on is going to work or is the way to go.

So to me it's not overthinking it. I've been doing great the last couple of years. I've had many chances. I feel like I've improved every single year as far as going deeper. You know, last year I won, beat a lot of top-5 players in big events. You know, won a big tournament, won a 1000 in Montreal. I can't really ask for too much more, maybe just to go deeper in slams. But again, I'm right

there every time so it's hard to really nitpick on what I need to do better.

Q. One more question on the Olympics. Would you guys like to see the Olympics change to a team, more team-oriented format?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yes.

Q. Why?

JESSICA PEGULA: I just think it's weird that you could, like -- you should play as a team. I don't understand that I could play against another American. Like, that's just kind of a bummer. It kind of kills the whole team atmosphere, to me.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, I mean, I think you could go either way with it, I think. I think definitely they should bring back points. There needs to be some type of incentive. Like, it hurts everybody, like, especially the Americans a lot to not -- like, you miss two weeks of the year on U.S. hard. Yeah, I think that definitely needs to be brought back.

I don't know. I could see it go every way. From a biased standpoint, a team would be great. It would help us a lot.

JESSICA PEGULA: I think it would just be more fun to me, and it brings more of the Olympic atmosphere to it. It's weird when you can still play each other. And yeah, to me, that's just bizarre, yeah. Like, when I played doubles the last time, it almost felt more fun because we were the only doubles team left for our team and everyone was behind us and everyone wants you to win. I don't know. It would be weird playing each other for such a big moment and having the same coaches or the same team with you the entire week to me is weird.

I would love if it changed to more of a team aspect.

Q. Just taking those two points that you just raised on the points and the team aspect, wouldn't just playing on behalf of the USA be enough incentive instead of adding to it with the points? And on the team side, when you're you've got track and field, it's not a team aspect. You're still Americans are racing against Americans or Australians against Australians. Just on those points.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, but they have relays and stuff which I feel kind of balances it out a little bit. But I think the good incentive here is, yeah, there's points and it's a team aspect. To that point it would be even more of an incentive if there was both.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, I think playing for your country is enough, but if you take away, then there's no other tournaments during the Olympics. It's not only you're not

getting points at the Olympics, you're actually losing. You're actually losing points. I'm defending a title that week. I lose that.

So yeah, playing for my country isn't, is definitely enough if there wasn't anything else going on that week, and it's just the nature of the sport of tennis. There is more things that people focus on I think that --

JESSICA PEGULA: Other sports, that's what you're training for is those four years.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Exactly. Also, I just don't see, to be honest, like, going to the Olympics, you go there to win a medal. I feel like if I go there and don't win a medal, then it's not really, like -- I don't know, it's an experience, but I'm not doing much for my country if I'm not winning a medal.

Yeah, I feel like that's why you go.

JESSICA PEGULA: The Olympics is really stressing him out. These questions are really tearing him up. (Laughter.)

TAYLOR FRITZ: I'm saying that's why you go, and it would be nice if there was more incentive, because the only incentive I have is to try and get a medal.

JESSICA PEGULA: Shoot, maybe we do need to play mixed.

Q. Then you've got no points in Davis Cup, and then the following year you've got nothing to defend because if you win an Olympic medal and getting the points from that, you're not defending that the following year.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, but at least you can play tournaments to fill those two weeks. You can make up the points back. It's not the end of the world.

But I'd like to see a little bit more incentive. Davis Cup, yeah, it's a whole nother conversation.

JESSICA PEGULA: I think everyone has their priorities. Not priorities but their opinion on how they play the schedule and everything, too.

Q. There has been a report in New York Times where figures and governing bodies in tennis have expressed concern about the potential of an organization like the Saudi Arabian LIV organization has done for golf. Have you thought about the possibility of that happening in tennis and whether it would be a good or a bad thing?

TAYLOR FRITZ: There's obviously talks.

JESSICA PEGULA: I think it's inevitable, to be honest. Yeah, there is a lot of talks. I feel like there has been for the past year or so.

I feel like it's going to happen eventually, because money talks, and they have infinite amounts of money and they seem to be involved in every single sport in the world except for ours, so I'm sure ours is coming. Yeah, I don't know exactly when, but...

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, I mean, there's talks. When, if it happens, I think the biggest question mark is going to be if you compete on that tour, if you still are going to be able to play slams or not. I think that's going to be a big thing.

You know, we'll see what happens. I can't really say if it's a good thing or not until you could see how they would structure the tour, how it would be, to be honest. I do think the way the tour is now there is lots of things that could be improved. I guess you'd have to wait to see to see if a different tour came along, if, I guess, they made it better or they made it better for players.

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