

# United Cup

Friday, 29 December 2023

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

## Team Norway

### Captain Christian Ruud

### Casper Ruud

### Andreja Petrovic

### Malene Helgo

### Ulrikke Eikeri

## Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the press conference of Team Norway. Christian, if you want to say a few words about your preparation, how excited you are about this team event again.

CAPTAIN CHRISTIAN RUUD: It's always fun to play team competition. It's always nice to come to Australia, start the year with this tournament. We have been doing it for some years now.

We had good success when it was the ATP Cup. We beat the United States. We have good memories. Looking forward to fun time, and hopefully we can do well in the tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Malene, a few words about spending time with Casper.

MALENE HELGO: It's a great experience for me to be able to play here and learn from Casper, be in a team. I always like playing Fed Cup or Billie Jean King Cup. Yeah, I think it's giving a boost for the rest of the season.

THE MODERATOR: Casper?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, it's really fun to play on a team. The format this year is somewhat more favorable for smaller countries, I think. You have to win two matches instead of three to win the whole match. If we can play well, I think we have a chance to actually move on.

You never know in tennis. Like my dad said, we beat the U.S. in the ATP Cup the first year because we came in clutch and won the doubles.

We're ready for this week and hope that we can win some matches.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open up to questions.



**Q. Casper and Malene, can you talk what it's like leading one of the smaller teams? Might make you the underdogs. What is that challenge like?**

MALENE HELGO: I mean, I think it's a good thing to be underdog. You relax, do all that we can do well. We can play some good tennis.

On the paper, my opponent should be better, but I like playing like that. Just relax and enjoy.

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, Norway is no big tennis country at all. It's fun for us to be here and learn from other countries. You have, for instance, Greece, two top players, one on the men's and one on the women's side. It's a cool concept.

I think Malene doesn't typically play the bigger events on the WTA Tour, so I think it's a good opportunity for her, as well, to learn and to play matches that she typically doesn't get to play. Last year she played really well I think both matches, but against Italy she was quite close to win. I think she has a fair chance against everyone in the singles.

Most likely me and Ullrich will play mixed doubles. I think all matches are pretty open.

I will play, of course, lower-ranked players than myself. It's not like I'm just going to walk in and win. I'm going to have to play really well to beat the players I'm playing. Malene is going to have to play really well. In the mixed, as well.

I think it's more open this year.

**Q. What can a good performance in an event like this do for you for the Australian Open? What are you looking for in your game?**

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, just maybe trying to kick-start the season with a couple of wins would be nice. Obviously the goal is to move on to the quarterfinal here. If we win two matches, that's what's required.

I'm just going to give it my all in the matches that I play. I've had a longer pre-season this year. Physically and tennis-wise I'm feeling maybe a little better, quicker, sharper. I get almost around 10 days of practice in Melbourne, as well.



I've done everything I can to be more prepared this time around in Australia. I hope it can pay off.

**Q. Casper, what is it like being in a team where your dad is the captain?**

CASPER RUUD: It's fun. It's normally how it is anyways. I have to listen to him (smiling). As a tennis player, it's interesting, 'cause in a way as a player you are the boss because you hire people for you. You have to listen to the people that you hire. It doesn't always make sense.

Typically the boss who hires, they have to listen to the boss. In our case, my dad is still the boss, and I have to listen. I hope my other teammates think it's okay to listen to him, as well (smiling).

**Q. A question about mixed doubles. It's obviously going to be really important for this tournament. Maybe the team could talk a little bit about how important that is to win those matches.**

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, it can be lose or win. If you can win one of the singles matches, everything is going to come down to the mixed doubles. I've never played too much mixed doubles, but I think it's fairly open.

You see it in the slams. It can be a bit anyone's game.

I remember Olympics, Rublev won the mixed doubles. He's not a typical doubles player. Obviously we hope that we can also play maybe mixed doubles in Olympics this year. It would be good couple of matches for us to play.

I think if we play well, even though we have some strong teams, Holland, they have Koolhof and Schuurs. I forget the name. Croatia as well, they have good players. I think it's a good challenge for us to play mixed doubles.

ULRIKKE EIKERI: Yeah, it's my first time in Sydney. I'm really excited to be here. We're really grateful to be able to be part of this event thanks to Casper who has led us.

We're underdogs. I think we're just going to try our best and try to take the opportunity, yeah.

ANDREJA PETROVIC: Yeah, it's really exciting being here again. Obviously representing Norway is always an honor. This year is obviously different from last year. As Casper said, how this is only going to be one men's singles and women's singles, then mixed doubles I think is favorable for us. I'm just looking forward to it. I think we can beat anyone, so...

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