

United Cup

Tuesday, 2 January 2024

Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Team Australia

Captain Lleyton Hewitt

Storm Hunter

Matthew Ebden

Press Conference

HUNTER-EBDEN/Pegula-Ram

6-3, 6-1

Team USA - 1

Team Australia - 2

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations are in order. You have qualified for the quarterfinals here at the United Cup. Storm, if you want to kick us off, just talk about how you approached your final match today and the emotions, learning that you qualified.

STORM HUNTER: Yeah, I mean, obviously before the match, I didn't know exactly the, I guess, situation, but we just knew we had to win and try and win, yeah, as many games and lose as least games as possible.

Obviously a lot of pressure in that moment, and Matty and I just went out and did our thing. Yeah, we played a great match. It wasn't till the end that we realized we qualified. I think that's an amazing effort from the whole team, especially coming from Friday where, yeah, it was obviously tough to go down to the Brits.

Then to come out today, Demon played unreal. I think he really set the tone for the team, straightaway from the first point he was on. That was an unbelievable effort to watch. Then Ajla also played a great match and had a lot of opportunities. She played really, really well. Yeah, we just wanted to do our bit and try and give the team the best chance possible.

Yeah, it's pretty cool. Amazing to qualify and to get another tie here in Perth and the opportunity to, yeah, keep going.

THE MODERATOR: Matt, your thoughts?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Literally she said everything. I completely agree with everything she said. Alex, Ajla, team effort, down Friday, just to come back and have



another chance. I love playing in this arena. Clearly Storm, as well. We're from here, but all the Aussies, hopefully everyone feels welcome. It's been a good crowd.

We hope can just get it done again on Wednesday, put another big effort in and keep going in this team competition. They're always super special. Only a few times a year we get to play these team comps. To team up with the girls, it's something super special. I've never done it before. Yeah, excited.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Lleyton, congratulations on your team's success. I know there's a bit of water to go under the bridge yet, but if Serbia do get through tomorrow, that's who you'll be taking on. Based on what you saw tonight from Alex and how sensational he was out there, is what you saw tonight, is that capable of beating Novak?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Don't know. Obviously Novak hit the ground running as soon as he got here as well, playing great tennis the other night and last night. It'd be a true test for Alex. You know, he probably has to step up to the plate and play even better than today.

But they're the tests and the challenges he wants. He's pushing to get in the top 10 in the world. This is where he wants to be. He wants to challenge himself against the best players. Yeah, he'd be pumped to get that opportunity. We'll see what happens.

Q. Storm and Matt, as proud West Aussies, where does tonight rate? That was incredible. Where do you think Wednesday night will rate? I reckon there's going to be a massive house regardless of who you're facing.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, it's super up there, super special. You can't almost compare it to anything like Davis Cups, like these team comps that we play for Australia, especially here at home, being West Aussies. For me it's super exciting, way up there. Some of those great memories, I can't compare it to anything. It's up there on its own.

STORM HUNTER: Yeah, same with Matty. This is something I was really looking forward to. To play with Matt, honestly, like I've said, it's honestly a dream come true, and to get the win today to give ourselves the



opportunity. Yeah, this arena is amazing, the fans have been incredible.

Yeah, Wednesday hopefully, yeah, I think it's going to be another big crowd, which is awesome. Honestly, that's why we play tennis, we want to play in these big moments, you know, and representing our country. There's no greater honor.

So, you know, I think we're all kind of, like, Bring it on, let's go. I think that's the true Aussie spirit. Yeah, we're going to go after it and it's really exciting.

Q. Lleyton, isolating Alex's performance tonight, was that some of the best tennis you've ever seen him play?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: It's definitely up there. Yeah, there has been times in Davis Cup, he played Cilic last year when we were 1-nil down and played ridiculous. I think he beat him 2 and 2, and he was faultless. He played Rafa last year in this competition, as well, and played unbelievable.

Yeah, there's been more than those occasions but they're the few that come to the top of my head at the moment. But for him, I think, you know, starting the new year, he was disappointed with the result three days ago, but I actually thought he got better and better as that match went on.

I was confident that he was going to come out here tonight and play really well. I think he deep down liked the fact that he could stamp his authority for the whole team tonight. You know, first on, give us that confidence that we could get on a bit of a roll and give ourselves a chance to get through. He was able to do that, and it was bloody impressive.

Q. Matty and Stormy, you don't get the opportunity to play mixed doubles that much through the year, four times, and then you've got the Olympics as well this year. Has there been any talk between you for you two to actually become a mixed doubles combination at all the majors and also Olympics?

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yes. A couple months ago, Storm and I spoke about playing the slams this year, potentially Olympics as well. Then we both saw United Cup was on the card and I said, Are you entering? We can practice together and start here in United Cup.

So it's the perfect start for us as a combination, and I think, you know, super special to play mixed in all the slams with an Aussie. That's what you want, in doubles and mixed, these team comps, it makes it extra special to get Aussie support supporting two Aussies. As a doubles player now and mixed doubles player, that's all I could ask for. Yeah, I'm excited for it.

Q. Just specifically about this atmosphere, how much did that actually lift the two of you tonight?

STORM HUNTER: Yeah, I think it definitely helped us. I mean, I think Demon, he was honestly incredible and I think the crowd really got behind him. Yeah, he definitely set the tone. I think, yeah, he was amazing.

So I think from that first moment that he stepped out there, the crowd was lively. He was, yeah, he was not going to lose that match, which was amazing to watch.

And then, yeah, with Ajla, also, a close match. I think that even though she lost, it came down to the mixed, I think the crowd was engaged. Obviously knowing that we're locals, it's kind of like us taking on the world, which was pretty cool. Yeah, we just wanted to do everybody proud.

Yeah, definitely helped that the crowd, I don't think you can get that anywhere, and obviously we get it at home here during January and during Billie Jean King Cup and Davis Cup home ties, which aren't that common, that often now, as well. So we definitely try and enjoy that moment and cherish that, because the rest of the year it's a long year being overseas and can feel far away from home. So enjoying the home experience.

Q. You're No. 4 in doubles at the moment, and with a strong Australian Open, you could, providing Storm maintains her spot at the top, you could join her as an Australian No. 1. What would that mean to you to join Storm, to have two No. 1s?

MATTHEW EBDEN: It would be awesome, be amazing. That's what I set out to do in the last year or two. I think I have probably been a few matches here and there, lost a few finals the last few months, where if I had have won them, I might have been No. 1.

So I had those chances, but also won a lot of matches super close and just got over the line to have that opportunity, too. So I'm grateful to be where I'm at.

Just doing my best, just give it my best shot. Yeah, of course I'm going to go for No. 1. Yeah, to have two Aussies at the top, I think the history of Australian tennis, it's so rich in singles and doubles, of course, that we would be honored to be part of that. Well, Storm already is, but I would be doing my best and be incredibly honored to try and join that club.

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