

United Cup

Friday, 5 January 2024

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Team Germany

Captain Torben Beltz

Angelique Kerber

Alexander Zverev

Press Conference

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THE MODERATOR: Well done, Team Germany. You're through to the semifinals tomorrow. Torben, why don't you talk about overall the performance of the team today.

CAPTAIN TORBEN BELTZ: Yeah, I think Team Germany is very happy today because we just got through to the semifinal as best second team from the round, so that's really great for us.

I think also great team effort today with Angie in first match playing against a very good-playing Maria Sakkari, and Sascha playing great today, and first time for Laura for the United Cup this year.

I think it was a great day for Team Germany, and we're happy to play tomorrow, the semifinal.

THE MODERATOR: Sascha, you won all your singles. You must be so pleased with your form so far in the tournament.

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: Yeah, definitely. But I'm happy I can help with the team, because last year I really couldn't. I lost all my singles matches. I won one mixed with Laura. Didn't really matter that much. I'm obviously very happy that I can kind of help the team.

We talked about this with Angie. I mean, there were a few times during the Hopman Cup where we got to the finals and I couldn't win a singles match. Now so far it's been the opposite, but, you know, it can change quickly, especially for a player like Angie, it can change within one or two points, and then you kind of feel your game. Then you start winning all of a sudden.

Because I remember in 2020, I remember I played ATP Cup, I lost all three matches during my ATP Cup, I think I only won one set, and then I got to the semifinals of the Australian Open where I had really chances to go to the



final.

It can change quickly. I'm sure that Angie is just that good of a player where it can change.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. Sascha, a great start to 2024 and an excellent tournament so far.

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: I can't tell at all if you're from Australia, mate. (Laughter.)

Q. You're the reigning Olympic gold medalist. How important is the Olympics in your year now that we're in 2024? Tell us about how important defending that title is to you.

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: Yeah, it's going to be one of the biggest events this year, that's for sure. With the Grand Slams, it's the biggest event. I'm really going to be looking forward to coming back there. I'm really going to be looking to representing Germany, as well.

Obviously, you know, playing on the clay courts of Roland Garros, it's going to be two times this year. Yeah, hopefully I can be successful there (smiling).

Q. Your battles with Stefanos Tsitsipas is obviously very well documented. I think it's a 9-5 record in Stefanos's favor. You must have been pleased tonight to get the win over Stefanos, given his dominance against Christian Diez a couple of nights ago.

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: Yeah, definitely I thought the level was quite high. I thought that obviously I had a little bit of pressure with us being 1-0 down, but I felt well on the court today and I was happy with that.

Q. Angie, back on the circuit after 18 months out after giving birth. How does the body feel? Your thoughts on your return to professional tennis.

ANGELIQUE KERBER: You know, body-wise I'm feeling good, but of course what I feel I need the matches. It's always different if you practice, and I practiced very hard in the last few months. But of course when you are getting on court and playing matches, the pressure is there, you know, that you have to win the big points. Yeah, of course it's completely different, the intensity, than on the practice side.



But that's good. I mean, I had so many matches already here, and I'm looking forward to have another one tomorrow. Yeah, I'm feeling good so far, but hopefully I can, you know, making the transition from the practice to the match and winning a match maybe tomorrow.

Q. Sascha and Angie, first to you, Sascha, looking ahead to playing Alex, you've got a 6-1 record against him, your thoughts going into that, and Angie, you've got a 3-0 record against Ajla.

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: I'm 6-1 against him?

Q. 6-1 to you. The one time he beat you was ATP Cup in 2020.

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: That's one of the three matches I talked about. I won a set against him, that was my peak in that tournament.

Q. Your thoughts going into those respective matches, and do those past records mean anything tomorrow and also coming up against the Australian crowds?

ANGELIQUE KERBER: You know, I think for me, you know, to play against Ajla, I think it doesn't matter the head-to-head. She is also coming from back injury last year, and I'm also coming back from 18 months' break. So I think for both of us it's great to being in the same, having good matches before the Australian Open.

I'm sure we will have a tough battle tomorrow outside. And also, I mean, of course we are playing against Australia. I think the crowd will be amazing. Yeah, I'm really looking forward to feeling the energy again on court, and yeah, trying my best to win my match finally.

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: I mean, I didn't know that I was 6-1, to be honest. But look, I mean, I think he's playing one of the best tennis of his life, right? Beating Novak in straight sets, that kind of always shows that you're playing really well.

Yeah, I mean, the last time we played was probably Rome 2022, so that's a while back. Things have changed a little bit. I think he's gotten a lot better, you know, closing in on the top 10, as well.

I mean, of course, it's better to have that kind of head-to-head record than the opposite, but I'm expecting a tough match. Especially here, I think he's going to be very motivated and the whole team, Australia is going to be very motivated, and the crowd definitely plays a factor in that.

But yeah, I'm looking forward to another tough match.

Q. Sascha, you mentioned how he's improved a lot since then. What in particular do you think he's doing well?

ALEXANDER ZVEREV: No. 1 thing is his serve. His serve is the thing that stands out the most out of all improvements that he made. He's always been quick, he's always been a great returner, he's always been a great baseliner, but he never had a big serve, and that has changed I would say over the past two years, 18 months maybe. He's really getting some pop on his serve. He can really mix it up. I think that is the biggest improvement that he made over the last 18 months.

Q. Angie, in terms of it's in some way the perfect kind of comeback to be able to play four matches in a week, getting to test yourself repeatedly. Where have you found yourself after the three matches in terms of the stuff you feel like you're really, really pleased with, coming back in a competition you think is really clicking, and where do you think the gap is you're trying to chase down?

ANGELIQUE KERBER: You know, I think for me it's more like to being on court, on the match court, and having my routine again. You know, this is something I missed, and which has to come back, and having my rituals. And, you know, focusing on every single point, point by point, and winning the big points, I think this is also something I have to improve a little bit in the next few days.

Yeah, that's why I think for me it's a perfect start to have four matches in one week, and, you know, I have tough battles against top-10 players already, top-30. You know, for me it's just a start and just right there where I end. Of course it's not easy, but this is what I like, to have big challenges. It's great to have another one and having another challenge, big challenge.

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