

United Cup

Friday, 27 December 2024

Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Team Canada

Captain Felix

Auger-Aliassime

Liam Draxl

Benjamin Sogouin

Leylah Fernandez

Stacey Fung

Ariana Arseneault

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to Perth, Team Canada. You'll start off the event this year matching up against Croatia. What are your first impressions on their team?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: Well, they're a great team. We know Donna and Borna very, very good. They've been on tour for a very long time, have achieved so many great things over their careers.

It's going to be a tough matchup. I think we're just going to have a lot of fun on court, going to bring the energy on the bench and on court and hopefully around the stadium. Hopefully we get the support from the fans.

THE MODERATOR: What are some of the aspects of the team format that you all enjoy?

CAPTAIN FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Well, it's always nice to feel like you're not only playing for yourself. Playing for teammates, playing for your country. Yeah, something bigger than just yourself on the court.

That's a nice feeling. I think, yeah, when you win as a team, the good emotions are exponential in a way. It's so good to win as a team. I had a chance to win as a team before. It's the best thing.

Hopefully we'll do that again.

THE MODERATOR: How much do you look forward to the Australian swing overall each year?

CAPTAIN FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: For me very much. It's my favorite time of the year almost because you have a couple weeks at home where you're training and resting, preparing for that. Then just to come to



Australia, everybody is eager to start the season well, to play good.

Also just the fans and the people, it's such a sports-oriented country. People I think love the Australian summer of tennis.

Every tournament you go, my first time here in Perth, but every city I've played in, it's packed. People show a lot of support. It's always a great start.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Leylah, you've been in Australia for quite a while now, practicing in Melbourne. How have you been adjusting to the conditions?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I've been adjusting pretty well. The first few nights it's been very hard staying awake. Jet lag hit me hard. I'm glad I made the decision of going to Melbourne early, earlier than expected. I think also the whole atmosphere was super fun. Tennis Australia, they've been super great to myself and my team, very accommodating.

I also can't complain about the weather: sun, hot, a little bit of cold here and there. No, we've just been enjoying our time here.

Q. Do you feel like you've got a bit of a head start on the new season?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: I guess we'll see. We'll see how it goes in tournaments.

But maybe a little bit. I think more the jet lag part. Honestly, we'll see 'cause I know everybody has been working very hard at home in their own pre-season, wherever that may be. I'm sure they're all going to come here ready and excited to start the year.

Q. You have the chance to play the likes of Gauff and Vekic. How important are the matchups to start the season and before a Grand Slam as well?

LEYLAH FERNANDEZ: It's super important. I feel very lucky to be part of this group. Coco and Donna, they're great players. To start off the year playing against them is going to be a great way to see where my level is at, what I need to improve in the next couple weeks leading up to the AO.



I do hope that there will be some good matches, a good show for everyone to watch.

Q. Felix you got to Perth a little bit earlier than some others. How have you adjusted?

CAPTAIN FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: So far, so good. Yeah, the first few nights weren't easy. Especially I came, and it was right when the heat wave was here (smiling). When the pilot was like, It's 39 local temperature in Perth, I was not quite ready for that (smiling).

Yeah, the first few days of practice were challenging, but now I'm feeling good. Yeah, the last few days leading up to tomorrow's match have been really good. One more day today to adjust, yeah, get a bit of rhythm on the court and get ready mentally for tomorrow.

So, yeah, ready to go.

Q. How is the back feeling? Refreshed after a little bit of time off?

CAPTAIN FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Yeah, it feels good. I was struggling a bit at the end of the season. Now it feels good. It feels healthy, 100%. Ready to go physically and mentally.

Q. You're led by Leylah and Felix, obviously two players who have gone deep into Grand Slams before. How nice is that?

STACEY FUNG: Yeah, I mean, I wake up to be a part of the team with them last year as well. It's obviously such a great environment. They're very open to us, if we have any questions, and just being able to be in such an intimate environment and feel very inspired, getting to see them practice and being in the same environment.

Yeah, it's been great so far.

Q. Liam, Benjamin, what do you hope to get out of this week?

BENJAMIN SOGOUIN: I think it's going to be a great experience. It's always an honor to represent Canada. Just surrounded by a great group of people here. Hopefully we can go far. Just going to do whatever I can in my role on the team to get us through, yeah.

Q. Liam?

LIAM DRAXL: Yeah, it's super cool, yeah, being a part of a team atmosphere. I think four of us played college tennis, so I'm sure we're all fans of the team environment. Again, the tour can get lonely sometimes.

Yeah, it's super cool. Going to be seeing Leylah, Felix

battling it out. Going to learn a lot. Like Ben said, just going to contribute any way I can to get Canada through.

Q. Ariana, who of these guys is going to bring the most energy this week?

ARIANA ARSENEAULT: I hope we all bring the same amount of energy. Again, as Liam said, we all played college tennis, so we know what it means to bring more to the team.

It's really fun to be playing for your own country. I think that's really exciting. I'm ready to bring a lot of energy and, again, contribute what I can to the team.

Q. Felix, playing captain this week, does that mean you'll be making the doubles picks?

CAPTAIN FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: I think it's going to be a team decision (smiling).

Yeah, no, I mean, by default I was the playing captain. I was in that role before in 2022 actually once. Turned out really well for us. We won the thing, so... Maybe it's good luck when I'm playing captain.

Let's see how it goes. But, no, I won't be making any calls by myself. I think we're all going to talk to each other, communicate, and see who is feeling good to play.

Of course, starting with Leylah and myself in the singles, and then talking through the doubles who feels good to go. I don't know, we'll see if I maybe make a call of we have the timeout now in the mixed doubles. Yeah, any player or captain can call it. We'll see if we use that early or later in the match.

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