

# United Cup

Friday, 27 December 2024

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

## Team Australia

**Captain Lleyton Hewitt**

**Alex de Minaur**

**Omar Jasika**

**Matthew Ebden**

**Olivia Gadecki**

**Destanee Aiava**

**Ellen Perez**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the Media Day. We will start with the captain and two No. 1s. How excited are you to be back in Sydney? Especially you, Lleyton, you have a long history at this venue, won this tournament 25 years ago, the first professional event we played here. How excited are you to be back with the team and how do you see your first tie against Argentina?

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: Makes me feel old, 25 years. No, it's great. Yeah, obviously last year, on the back of last year we had a really good run. Came awfully close to making the final and potentially winning the United Cup last year. So yeah, we started off in Perth last year, which was fantastic. Alex had one of his biggest wins ever against Djokovic over there.

We were able to come here and went down to a very tight match to Germany. Yeah, I love Ken Rosewall Arena, I think it's a fantastic place to play. Big matches on, I think it's a great atmosphere, especially now with the roof as well, and obviously we're very fortunate to be the host nation here and hopefully get plenty of support like we have previous years.

OLIVIA GADECKI: Yeah, I'm really excited to be here in Sydney competing. We have such a great team, and to start the year playing United Cup is amazing, and I'm really looking forward to it.

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, very happy to be here in Sydney, playing on Ken Rosewall Arena, in a team environment. I think it's going to be a lot of fun. I think we're all very excited and ready for the matches to begin.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.



**Q. Matt and Ellen, you guys have a fair bit more experience playing mixed doubles than some of the other teams in your group. How do you feel you can use that to your advantage this week?**

ELLEN PEREZ: Yeah, I think mixed doubles is sometimes a bit of a flip of the coin at times, but it's great to have played quite a few times with Matt. Matt has obviously done very well in doubles, in Grand Slams and mixed. So to have that experience, to have that communication and friendship on the court, I think that's vital. Yeah, I think we complement each other really well.

I hope that's a big plus for us this week.

MATTHEW EBDEN: Yeah, similar. Just having the experience together, knowing each other off the court, on the court, in the team environment. Yeah, it's exciting to be here back in Sydney. Like Lleyton said, we had a cliff-hanger semifinal last year but it took many good matches from the whole team to get to that point.

So we've got to do our job if it comes down to the mixed doubles, and we'll be ready.

**Q. Olivia, I wanted to ask about your matchup with Nadia. I think you've played each other once before. I just wanted to ask what you remember of that match and maybe what you learned.**

OLIVIA GADECKI: Yeah, I've played Nadia before at the Indian Wells, I think, at the start of the year. It was a tight match. It was, I just was traveling from Austin the week prior, and I didn't really have great preparation.

But, you know, she's a tough player, and it's going to take quite a bit to beat her. I think I've got the game and the ability. So I'm really looking forward to it.

**Q. She said that she thinks you've gained a lot of confidence in those 12 months since you last played each other. Would you agree with that? Do you think you're a different player than you were then?**

OLIVIA GADECKI: Yeah, I would say I'm definitely a different player. I've had a great year and I'm really going to try and take that momentum into the next, and, yeah, see what happens.

**Q. Alex, you have often said that Ken Rosewall Arena, like it was for Lleyton, your favorite court to**



**play on. What is it specifically about that court that you feel so comfortable on and like so much?**

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, look, it's no secret it's one of my favorite courts to play on. It probably has to do with me growing up, training here at Homebush, watching at that stage the Apia International, watching the matches, the players playing on that court, and wishing to be able to compete on that court one day.

I've had some great memories here. It's been, you know, some very good matches where I've gotten up for and I played some of my best tennis.

It's just playing at home, so that's why it's so special.

**Q. Omar, coming into a team environment, something that totally different and new for you, how has the experience been up to now and what are you expecting to get out of this?**

OMAR JASIKA: Yeah, it's been pretty cool to be part of a great team. I've only been here two days and it's been amazing so far. First time playing United Cup for me. Always dreamt of playing it and being part of the team.

Yeah, I'm really excited and can't wait to see how we go.

**Q. For Lleyton and Matt, outside of the 2016 Hopman Cup, it's been a bit of a drought for Australia in terms of trophies and team events. I wonder how motivating that is and do you feel this is the group that should be winning these type of titles?**

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: We came bloody close in a lot of them. Thanks for bringing it up. (Laughter.)

The biggest thing is we keep knocking on the door. You've got to do all the right preparation and give yourself the best chance of going out there and putting your hand up to try and win these kind of events.

As I said, I've been awfully proud of the teams I've captained the last nine or ten years now right across the board, and we have come bloody close, but it's not an easy thing to do. You look at some of these teams that end up winning these team competitions and they've got some pretty awesome players, some generational greats or legends of the game.

Once again, we'll do all the preparation that we need and hopefully we can go out there and execute. But we're certainly not taking anything for granted.

**Q. Alex, obviously this was the tournament that kind of springboarded your fantastic 2024. Wondering, with that, is there a sense of pressure you feel to perhaps replicate such a good start to the year and what it did for you?**

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, at the start of the year, or still this year -- last year, it was, I don't even know, it was a great way to start the season. Played some of my best tennis, gained a lot of confidence from my level playing, beat some great opponents.

But I never have associated playing in Australia as pressure. I've always associated it as excitement and something that I'm looking forward to every single year, because we don't get to do it as often as we would love to.

So whenever we're back here, the season is starting, I know we're playing in front of our home crowd, and that's always exciting, what I get up for, and I think it always brings the best tennis in me.

**Q. A question for Lleyton. Obviously Australia has got guaranteed matches; Great Britain, Argentina. Wondering what you've identified as the key matchups in those rounds.**

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: All of them, to be honest, because there's not many matches. You know, it's only the three. And as we spoke about mixed doubles, when it comes down to the mixed, you've got to be ready to go right from the start. Sometimes it can only come down to two or three points in a match in a mixed doubles match.

Obviously the singles are crucial. So, you know, I feel like we've got good opportunities in all our singles matches to try and get through the group stage. Our focus is to obviously try and win the group stage. But I know there is, the best case, second-place team can still make it through to the quarterfinals, as well. So every single win or opportunity you get to win sets or win rubbers is crucial.

**Q. Lleyton, it's been a couple of years now that you've been in this role as captain for a mixed team. How different, easy, challenging, is it compared to captaining as the Davis Cup captain, and who is easier to deal with, the women or the men?**

CAPTAIN LLEYTON HEWITT: No, it's good to do both, obviously. Obviously the guys, I have a good team behind me though here. And I have the last few years sort of helped out with the women's players, as well, which makes life a lot easier for me to go out there on the court.

I feel like one of my biggest strengths is obviously tactics during a match but also motivating the players. I think it's really important to know how your players respond to different situations, especially when they're under pressure. Most of the guys, you know, I know them inside out, you know, from dealing with them on the Davis Cup level.

The women, that's one thing you have sort of got to work on that connection a little bit, but they have their private coaches here, as well, so it's a unique dynamic. I just try and help out where possible. If I can add a little bit of experience here and there that might add 1%, 2%, 3% that might help us get over the line, then hopefully it's a positive.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports