

United Cup

Saturday, 28 December 2024
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Team Norway

Captain Christian Ruud

Casper Ruud

Viktor Durasovic

Malene Helgo

Ulrikke Uikeri

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the United Cup. You had some great matches last year. Christian, how excited are you to be back, and isn't this the best way to start a new season?

CAPTAIN CHRISTIAN RUUD: Yeah, it's great. It's a great event, and it's fun to play on the team, like we said before. Especially we can play with the women, some mixed doubles. We don't do that too often.

But we really enjoyed it last year because it was close matches. We managed to get through the group stage and almost beat France in the quarterfinal. As a small country Norway is, it was a good effort for us.

Trying to repeat or even do better this year, that's the goal.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Casper and Ulrikke, you guys played really well last year, and you had a lot of success. How exciting is it to start the year playing mixed doubles? How are you preparing specifically for the mixed doubles matches in what is a very difficult group?

ULRIKKE EIKERI: Yeah, I mean, it's really exciting to have another opportunity this year to have qualified here because of Casper. We're all just really grateful and excited to play.

Last year we had some really close matches, had a good win. I practice doubles every day, so that's my main focus. Casper's focus is singles, so that's what he does.

I think we do our best when we're on the court and try to build from last year.

Q. Casper.



CASPER RUUD: Hopefully it gets down to -- or, yeah, the last year it got down to the mixed doubles every match, and it was fun. It was exciting because you felt like you played a mixed doubles that really mattered for the team. If you're 0-2 or 2-0, the match is kind of over already. Going 1-all into the mixed doubles everything was on the line for the last match.

I haven't played much mixed doubles so it was a fun experience. Different obviously. Receiving when a woman was serving and serving to a woman, it was just a different sight. It was fun. It's impressive. Ulrikke played really good doubles.

Yeah, we were close in every match, and we got to win one of them, and that made us qualify for the group. We were a bit unfortunate in the quarterfinal, I think. New opportunities this year.

Q. Obviously you two have both had a lot of success on clay. Was it a bit disappointing with the entry criteria for the Olympics that you weren't able to play? Do you think that's something that should be changed in the future?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, it was an interesting rule. Honestly, I thought it was not really fair because you had two good players that could potentially team up. Criteria's are strange and different in Olympics somehow, because for singles suddenly you have doubles players needing to play singles. Yeah.

Then you had two players like us that on rankings should be able -- or on paper should be able to play together, and then we couldn't because, yeah, of the rules. It was a shame. I was ready to play if we could, but rules didn't allow it.

There's plenty of rules in the Olympics that they have to take care of. That's a rule that they potentially should look at I think.

Q. Viktor, you've been at this event with your team for a number of years now. Just how nice is it always for you to start the season this way and being around the best players in your country?

VIKTOR DURASOVIC: It's always fun to come back to Australia. So I definitely will be looking forward to the matches, yeah. Just I enjoy it the same every time.



Q. Casper, I wonder if you could talk about how you're feeling after the offseason, what your goals are for this upcoming year?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, it's been a short but sweet, I guess, offseason. Some tough weeks of practice, and I played a few exhibition matches on the way down here. So a little bit mix of both.

It's been good. It's always exciting to come down here. It's a long travel, but weather is always nice, and people are nice.

So for the remaining of the year I haven't almost had time to think about, like, that many goals, but staying in the top 10 is definitely one of them. Maybe trying to do a little bit better in the slams this year.

Last season was good in some ways, but, for example, here in Australia I felt like I could have done better, and Wimbledon especially also. A few maybe better and deeper runs in Grand Slams is one goal for this year.

Yes, staying top 10 and putting myself in position to do well at the biggest tournaments.

Q. Christian, what's easier for you: Being captain/coach of the team or being coach of Casper?

CAPTAIN CHRISTIAN RUUD: Well, I guess being coach of Casper because I've been that for so many years. But it's fun to be the captain of the team and also coach Malene a little bit and also the mixed doubles. It's a new experience for me, so I really enjoyed it.

I think we had a good team spirit last year and that's why we did well. We have done well also before because I think playing on the team and being from a small country, I think it gives you a little bit of extra positive energy in trying to compete against the big nations.

So I think it's a good concept for us. It's very enjoyable to be on the bench and then coach Casper and also the girls.

Q. Casper, after coming off 2024 keeping yourself in the top 10, what have you set as any specific goals for 2025? Is there one or two things that is absolutely priority?

CASPER RUUD: Kind of, like I said, if you end the year top 10 it's been a good year, but I think that top 5 is also doable, reachable definitely.

If you look at the players, in my eyes Jannik and Carlos had two phenomenal years, both of them. Jannik maybe even more so because he was so steady throughout the whole year, but Carlos still won two slams and a 1000.

Those two are what most people are looking to and referring to these days. They will be tough to handle, but other than that, I think it's open for changes in the top 5 definitely. It always is. Everyone is competitive.

Like after Roland Garros this year, I was in a good position. I think I was maybe third or something in the race. So if I had continued and played well and won more matches in the fall, I could have done it, but didn't have the best fall.

I think I showed last year, especially the beginning, that if I'm playing well, I can be in position to take a few more steps. I've been there before. So that's something that is like a high goal, but something I might maybe refer to as like maybe the kind of biggest -- not biggest goal, but like a tough goal to try to reach and chase this year.

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