

United Cup

Sunday, 5 January 2025

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Team USA

Captain Michael Russell

Coco Gauff

Taylor Fritz

Denis Kudla

Danielle Collins

Desirae Krawczyk

Rob Galloway

Press Conference

Team USA - 2

Team Poland - 0

THE MODERATOR: Congrats to Team USA. We'd like to hear from the captain first up. How proud are you for your team?

CAPTAIN MICHAEL RUSSELL: Just incredible effort, competitiveness, and just the will to win. I mean, it's just refuse to lose. Coco just dug in, Taylor dug in, you know, all week.

Tough matches. They played great. Energy from the bench was amazing. Just really proud of the whole team and to become successful and have the trophy at the end.

THE MODERATOR: Coco, you really wanted to play United Cup for the first time. You came up as the MVP of the tournament. How proud are you of your performance today against Iga?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I'm really happy with how I played today. I knew how important it was to get that 1-0 start. I just dug deep and, you know, got that win. Yeah, I got the shovel out.

That was the theme of the week. Just happy that first United Cup, first W, it's feeling good.

THE MODERATOR: Taylor, you have now won the United Cup for the second time. What was the key in the tiebreak against Hubi? You always have such close matches.



DENIS KUDLA: You just don't doubt Fritz.

COCO GAUFF: Don't doubt Taylor Fritz.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Huge key is just trying to get on to some of his serves, get myself in as many points as possible, trying to get free points on my serve, which I didn't do a great job of in the breaker but I was able to tough out some of those second-serve points, I don't know, just kind of make him have to beat me on a lot of the points. I think that's what it was.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. I was just wondering, Coco, if you can elaborate on that shovel celebration you just mentioned, what the origins of that is and what that means.

COCO GAUFF: It came from Denis. Honestly, I think it started, like, in my match against China. I was playing Shuai, and she was playing really great tennis. You know, he was, like, great digging, keep digging. Then the shovel celebration came from him. I just kind of took it and ran with it. That was the theme of the week for me.

Q. Denis, you retired from professional tennis yesterday. Can you just speak about how special it is to end your career with this kind of a tournament victory?

DENIS KUDLA: Yeah, no, it's incredible to retire in this way, you know, representing my country, something that's super special, being with this group right here.

You know, I was saying how rare it is for...

COCO GAUFF: Tattoo, tattoo.

DENIS KUDLA: I'll get to that part. How rare it is to actually end my career on a W. Not too many people actually get to do that. To end on a happy note, I think it was super special. I didn't expect the emotions to come over me at all, but I'm super grateful for the opportunity.

You know, I'm ready for the next chapter. I'm ready to -- I have a tattoo on my leg from our first theme of getting locked in. So I'm going to put a shovel right next to it. I will have a shovel and a lock, and I hope my wife approves. She has no choice once it's on my body. (Laughter.)

Q. A question for Coco. Just wondering, after I think



that's back-to-back wins over Iga now, how much confidence do you have going to the Australian Open, not only that you'll be competitive but that you could potentially win it?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, honestly before every Grand Slam, I have the belief that I can win, and especially after US Open, I proved that I could do it. I definitely have belief that I can win.

Obviously this start of the season gives me a lot of confidence. I feel like when I'm playing confident tennis I'm playing great tennis. I definitely feel confident going into AO.

Q. Taylor, you always hoof those battles too. I'm curious how much you appreciate the whole digging situation, theme, whatever you want to call it?

TAYLOR FRITZ: No, I love it, honestly. That's all Tommy and I were saying during the Olympics. That was our celebration at the Olympics when we were winning those doubles matches.

But yeah, I really appreciate, like, the competitor that Coco is. She's played so well all week and fought so hard in all the matches. I can really have a lot of respect for that.

Q. Congratulations on the win. A question for Coco and Taylor. Just in terms of playing, you're the only team to field two top-5 players in singles in the competition. How much does that loosen you guys up a little bit to play freely, knowing that if you lose that you have good backup coming behind you and back and forth, and obviously the mixed, as well?

COCO GAUFF: I can speak for me. I had, like, a lot of confidence in Taylor even before this week came. So I knew that if I got my point on the board, if I did my job, that the job would be done. So I had full belief in him. Even in the tight moments, he came through, yeah.

TAYLOR FRITZ: It was great. We played the majority, almost every single match except for one, Coco played first so always put me up 1-0, so I felt like it put so much pressure on me, because I didn't want to be the one to lose it for the team because she already won (smiling).

Yeah, it's amazing. She's consistently putting us in a winning position where I can go out and know that if I take care of business that we don't need to leave it up to a mixed where honestly anything can happen. None of us really play a lot of mixed doubles.

COCO GAUFF: I have no idea what I'm doing on a mixed court.

TAYLOR FRITZ: We feel very confident, and obviously

we did have to play one deciding one against Canada, which was obviously a big match.

COCO GAUFF: Still had no idea what I was doing.

DENIS KUDLA: Just don't doubt Taylor Fritz.

TAYLOR FRITZ: It was great to not leave the matches up to that.

COCO GAUFF: I was getting coaching from Des, Rob, and everyone. I was just trying to execute. (Laughter.)

Q. Another one for Coco. I think you said before that you won the US Open when you weren't playing your best tennis, and I just wanted to get your assessment, now you have had a couple of weeks of matches this year, where you feel your level is at.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I definitely think this is one of my best tennis performance, especially in today's match, was a high-level match. I think both of us were playing well.

I think honestly when I had that confidence in that final, where I actually felt really bad in that final, it just gives me confidence because I know when I'm playing good, if I can win when I'm not playing well, that when I'm playing good I should win.

I think for me, I just let loose, let the pressure go, realize the worst thing that can happen is you lose a match and you go back to work and try to get better for next time.

Q. To Coco and to Taylor, with the number of matches you have played this week, and you talk about levels, out of 10, where would you say you are, and what do you feel you need to maybe pick up on going into the start of the Open?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I'd say I'm at, like, a 7, I think. I think I'm serving really, really well. I'm really happy with how I'm serving. So I'd say that's a 9, 9.5.

But I'd say the rest of the game I think can improve a bit. Just in that last match today, I think I moved the best I have moved all week, so I think that's an improvement. I think normally, for me, when I play more matches, I start to move a bit better the more I play.

But yeah, I think just groundstrokes, hitting the ball, returning, there are some things I could do a bit better, but I am really happy with how I'm serving.

COCO GAUFF: I'd say for me kind of the opposite, like 7 or 8. I definitely think I could have served better, I felt like. Today I served decently well, but I do think I could serve better.

Off the ground today I felt really good, like a 9 or 10. In my last matches, not that great. I think I can get a little bit more aggressive. Today I was definitely aggressive on both wings.

I did return well. Yeah, in the previous matches I would say I could be more aggressive, but today I did that, so I'm coming out and being aggressive. I had to run. Obviously when you play Iga, you have to run, but obviously I'm not only going to be doing that today. Yeah, I think I can just play a little more aggressive.

(Presentation of award to Denis Kudla.)

CAPTAIN MICHAEL RUSSELL: We all signed this for you, part of your sendoff. Amazing career.

DENIS KUDLA: Thank you so much.

Again, at the end of the day, I think yesterday what was so amazing, just that emotions came out of me. At the end of your career, I didn't expect it, I told Fritz in the car, I said I didn't expect to cry at all. It kind of all just came over.

I think something that happens in tennis is you don't really get too many opportunities to enjoy victories, enjoy the highest of highs, just because we're wired in a way to just -- you've got to forget about it, can't get satisfied, got to keep going, keep going, keep going.

What makes this event so special is we take this moment, we're out here, drinking, having a good time. You don't get to be in a team environment that much.

So over the last three years, everyone who has been on this United Cup team has become a pretty close friend of mine. I will watch their career, will watch everything, try to help as much as I can.

Truly grateful for this. I look at this picture, and it's definitely something special. Every single person has a special place in my heart.

I'm grateful for the opportunity and grateful that I can make some kind of impact in tennis, and hopefully I stay around for a long time.

(Applause.)

FastScripts by ASAP Sports