

# United Cup

Friday, 2 January 2026

Perth, Western Australia, Australia

## Team Switzerland

**Captain Stan Wawrinka**

**Jakub Paul**

**Luca Castellnuovo**

**Belinda Bencic**

**Naima Karamoko**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Can you give us your thoughts about the United Cup and heading into your first matches?

BELINDA BENCIC: Obviously, really happy to be here again with Team Switzerland. It's always an honor representing. I love to start the year like this, and it's really nice to play in a team.

Yeah, and I hope we all had a good preseason, and we are really excited for tomorrow's match.

STAN WAWRINKA: Yeah, same. Really happy to be here, thanks to Belinda to qualify the Swiss team. It's my second time playing United Cup. I'm really looking forward. I think it's amazing here, and for us to play men's and woman's, to play the mixed to start the year here. So looking forward to be the first time playing first time in Perth.

THE MODERATOR: We will open it up to questions.

**Q. Stan, this must be a special, strange start to a special season. What's it feeling like going into '26?**

STAN WAWRINKA: Yeah, of course, it's going to be special, but it's going to be my last year. So after more than 20 years on tour, of course, it's going to be really special playing all those tournaments that I play so many times for one last time.

But in the same time, one year is really long. There's a lot of tennis to play, hopefully, and some good results. For me, I'm just grateful to be able to play those tournaments again one last time, one more time, to see all the fans around the world. I'm super happy also to discover new cities like here, Perth. For me, it's my first time. So I'm really looking forward.



**Q. Belinda, so obviously last season you had your titles in Abu Dhabi and Tokyo, and pretty strong 2025 season coming back from maternity leave. How do you hope to carry that momentum into 2026?**

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah, I definitely hope to carry it with me to 2026. Obviously, I think last year went -- or this -- yeah, last year -- went really well. You know, above our expectations really.

Yeah, we're just continuing what we're doing. And obviously not get ahead of myself too much, but still, of course, looking to climb the rankings and keep the momentum going.

**Q. So yesterday Naomi was up here talking about how she had walked past you on court and seen you with your daughter, and it kind of made her think of her being a mom, and she talked about how being a mom kind of -- motherhood kind of changed her mindset and the way she plays tennis. Can you elaborate, since having your daughter, how motherhood has kind of affected your mentality playing tennis?**

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah. I get this question a lot. For sure it changes you as a person, first of all, and then it changes you as a player. It's not like I was expecting that. You know, you just want to become a family outside of the court, and then you don't know what's going to happen on the court. Obviously this year has been going really well for us like that.

I think it just changes your perspective on how you see tennis and how you -- it's just not the universe of my life anymore. It's just another -- I can separate things much better now. Yeah, when I'm on the court, it's more of a job now and, yeah, less of, like, all day thinking about tennis kind of.

**Q. Your first two matches here, obviously, against Jasmine and Leolia. What do you think of those opponents, especially to start your 2026 season?**

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah, I think it's really good matches. You know, you're guaranteed two matches for sure. It's great. You have some very good opponents and for sure challenging. You know, the first matches of the year it's always a little bit more tricky, but I'm happy.

You are challenged right away. We actually had the exact same group last year playing also France and Italy.



So we hope for a good revenge.

**Q. Naima, what do you hope to get out of the week and United Cup? Will we see you in mixed doubles potentially? What do you hope to get out of the week here in Perth?**

NAIMA KARAMOKO: Can you repeat?

**Q. Will we see you in mixed doubles here in Perth? And what do you hope to get out of the experience here at the United Cup?**

NAIMA KARAMOKO: Yeah, it's my first time here. I'm very grateful to be in this team with two great champions from our country. If I get to play, I'll give 100%. If I don't, I'll also give 100% to support the team. But I'm very grateful to be here.

**Q. Luca and Jakub, let me ask you, the opportunity to be in a team with Stan and Belinda, what does that mean to you? What are you hoping to get out of the week?**

JAKUB PAUL: Obviously it's very great to have them in the team. We can learn a lot from them, how they practice, how they play the matches. It's really great to see them in action from very close up. Didn't get the chance to see them a lot. So that's very nice. Obviously, for me, it's a great preparation also for the AO.

Yeah, I'll be here for the team. If I get to play, it's great, but obviously it's more to learn some new things from them.

LUCA CASTELNUOVO: Yeah, it's awesome to be around Belinda and Stan for sure. It makes it a little bit extra special since it's Stan's last year. And speaking for myself, he's been my idol for as long as I can remember. So it's definitely a little bit extra special for me to be here.

And thanks them for having us around. We wouldn't be here without them. Yeah, it's great.

**Q. Stan, if I may ask you, and forgive a couple more questions on your farewell tour, have you been surprised or overwhelmed by the well wishes that you have got since you announced this would be your final year? Has anything surprised you about the responses from fans and your colleagues?**

STAN WAWRINKA: No, it's always nice to receive so many message and support, of course. Like I say, for me, I'm passionate about the sport since ever. I really enjoy being on tour, traveling, playing in front of all those people around the world. That's one of the reasons why I kept playing for so long. It's to play in front of the fans.

It's, of course, amazing, but like I say, I announce it is

going to be my last year, but I still have one full year of tennis. There's a lot of tournaments to play. Yeah, hopefully I can enjoy that and get some good results.

**Q. Following up on that, this season will obviously be sentimental, emotional, but I'm sure you want to squeeze out as many more wins from your career as you can. How will you balance those two things?**

STAN WAWRINKA: Yeah, like I always did, I always try to push my limit for me. Being an athlete is always doing the maximum you can, pushing your own limits, trying to reach the highest you can with your own ability.

Of course, it's going to be difficult sometimes in tournaments. It's going to be really emotional, because I know how I feel and how I am, and I love so much this sport, but in general, I'm really happy with my decision. I'm at peace with that.

I'm happy to have this chance to still be able to play at that level at 40 years old. Like I say, hopefully I can get some good result this year.

**Q. Final question from me. Roger, sadly, didn't have the opportunity to play a full final year because of injury. Are you hopeful that the body holds up during this year? Also, has Roger spoken to you at all about what to expect in your final year?**

STAN WAWRINKA: Yeah, that's the most challenging part when you get older in sport as an athlete. The risk of injury are always getting higher and higher, especially after 35 years old. I got enough injuries the last few years. I'm happy.

I'm feeling good, and that's also one of my goals is to be able to finish by playing tennis and not to have to finish after 20 years with an injury. Yeah, that's also one of the reasons why I became to the point that I wanted to be my last year is to finish on a good note. Hopefully it's going to be like that.

**Q. Stan, you had an amazing career. Obviously playing well through your 30s, now 40. What's the trick? What's the secret? Is there an elixir or anything special that you've done across your career you can attribute to your longevity? What's the trick?**

STAN WAWRINKA: There's no trick in sport, unfortunately. If not, we would all have it.

It's many things together. The passion of the sport. I always try to do the right thing since the beginning of my career. I always played the long game, always did some sacrifice some tournament, not to overplay tournaments when I was younger. Always look for the long-term career.

Yeah, I got some bad injury, too. Especially after 35 years old, I got two, three years out in total. So it's not always been easy, but you know, the sacrifice and the self-discipline are the most important when you want to play that long in the sport.

**Q. You've done so much across your career, Grand Slams, Davis Cups, playing in Olympics. What's been the highlight, the one moment, that one moment that you just -- was a pinch-me moment?**

STAN WAWRINKA: I think that there are those moments where before those big success, you know, when I was in the top 20, top 15, but sticking a bit there and not finding the way how to get better and how to reach higher results. So that were the most hard moments in my career.

**Q. Then, so your final year. Are you going to be back in Perth once you're officially retired? Do you think you can come back here maybe even to watch Switzerland in the next United Cup?**

BELINDA BENCIC: He's the Captain next year, for sure.

STAN WAWRINKA: Let's see. Let's see how it goes. Let's see first how we enjoy this week. Hopefully if we play well, if we leave Perth on a positive note, maybe I will come back as a Captain.

**Q. Belinda, obviously having your daughter here, which must be amazing, have you guys got to see much of Perth in the last couple of days? Because it is a dream for a kid with the beaches and everything. Have you got to do much sightseeing?**

BELINDA BENCIC: Not yet. Our Captain is making us practice so much. We have barely time to eat and sleep (smiling). No, I'm joking. We're going to --

STAN WAWRINKA: Quite busy with your family, so please (smiling).

BELINDA BENCIC: We're playing on Saturday, Sunday and then we have a day off. We're going to do something after.

And for sure, super excited to be back here and explore the city also with the family, but also with the team.

**Q. Such phenomenal year last year. What do you put it down to, that huge rise up the rankings?**

BELINDA BENCIC: Well, it definitely hasn't been easy to come back. It's definitely a lot of hard work and dedication and motivation behind it. I think I'm really happy how we managed to come back like that.

The work isn't over. You are trying to get better, as well. Hopefully this year I can pick up on the same, yeah, momentum.

**Q. I don't think Switzerland has ever made it past the group stage. What does it mean to play for your country, and what are the chances of getting to the knock-out stage this time around?**

BELINDA BENCIC: Well, for me it's always a big honor to play for my country. I love any team event. You know, we're always so alone all the year, so I always enjoy it a lot. I feel like I can really bring out the best tennis when we play in the team.

Hopefully, I think the first goal is to get out of the group stage. We have the same group like last time, so hopefully we can get a good revenge.

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