

United Cup

Monday, 5 January 2026

Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Team USA

Captain Michael Russell

Mackenzie McDonald

Varvara Lepchenko

Taylor Fritz

Coco Gauff

Christian Harrison

Nicole Melichar-Martinez

Press Conference

Team USA - 2

Team Spain - 1

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, team, on winning today and winning the group. Can you assess all the matches, starting with Michael?

MICHAEL RUSSELL: The first three hours or the last eight (smiling)? No. Look, I mean, the team fought so hard like we do. Coco had a tough match, did a great job winning the second set and coming back, and then had to turn it around in the mixed doubles and play great.

Taylor just battled like he always does and really tough, nail-biter down match points. I should say up match points. Look, I mean, that's what the team does.

It's a unique atmosphere here, and great support from everyone in the team zone. Came out, and that's why they've done so well here in the past, because everyone is playing for everyone.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Taylor, first of all, how much of a kind of point of pride is it for you that things obviously haven't been ideal coming into this year, but fighting and finding a way through and problem-solving as you did today?

TAYLOR FRITZ: First of all, I say injury-wise today was really positive for me. I felt like I started feeling my knee kind of towards the end of the first set, but in the past when I felt it, I start feeling it just get worse and worse and worse from that point on. I felt like my pain level stayed kind of at that starting point, so I was able to



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continue playing the whole match, and it never really became too much of an issue.

Even right now after everything I went through, it doesn't feel, like, as bad as I've gotten used to. It's a huge positive for me just injury-wise.

Yeah, just the situation today, I told everyone I was kind of a freeloader on the first day. I lost, and everyone kind of just picked up the slack. Today I needed to earn my keep for the team.

Q. To Coco, just curious how you felt about your singles performance and then how you bounced back and performed in the doubles?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, obviously it wasn't a great match for me. I tried my best to fight back with what I had in that moment, but yeah, once it was over, I kind of just sat in the bathroom for a little bit.

Then I knew I had a lot of confidence in Taylor, so I was just trying to make sure that I was ready for the mixed. I think that's the beauty of this event, that you have other people that can pick you up on your off days.

Yeah, I'm looking forward to doing better in the next matches.

Q. Also, obviously, I saw your post on Twitter this morning. I'm curious how when you see people kind of piling on and writing about you, how tough is that to kind of deal with? I imagine you maybe were hesitant to write something, and also, did that affect you at all obviously?

COCO GAUFF: No, and I don't think it was piling on. I was just trying to clarify what I meant. Yeah, I mean -- yeah, I wrote everything I have to say on the Tweet, but I didn't expect it to be blown out of proportion. I feel like there's worse things in the world.

TAYLOR FRITZ: That pissed me off. I already replied. I was here, and I know exactly what she meant. She said nothing wrong, but people always want to just assume the absolute worst out of everything, which is just like...

Q. Just to Christian, I'm actually curious, this is your third full season focusing on doubles, right? I'm curious, what have you learned since you made that shift about doubles, the art of doubles, and how you apply that in these situations?



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CHRISTIAN HARRISON: For me, I've been able to play consistent. Then obviously there's just different movement patterns when you are playing double a lot, that you pretty much learn to just not cover dead space on the court.

Yeah, I was happy that it could pay off, and we were able to help the team get through today.

Q. Question to both Coco and Taylor. The red light that illuminates on the net when the ball is out, is that an addition that you welcome, and can it clear up some confusion if there's a noisy crowd and you're not sure if a ball is in or out?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I'm not the biggest fan of it, to be honest. I didn't really notice it today. I think because of the sun out and the glare, it's not, like, super bright.

I think the match the other night when it's, like, a night match and it's very apparent, yeah, it was weird. I normally wouldn't care at all. I think it's good for the fans, but something about it just kind of bothered me.

COCO GAUFF: I didn't really care. It didn't bother me in either scenario. Christian and I were watching Taylor's match with no volume, so it was kind of nice to see when it was out when we couldn't hear.

Yeah, I mean, I would say it's, like, accessible. I was thinking maybe they did it for deaf people or things like that, so I don't know. But if it doesn't bother the players, I wouldn't mind it continuing.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, it's like I said, not my favorite thing ever, but if it's better for the spectators, then I think that's overall a good change.

Q. Taylor, last year you dropped your first match and then came back and won four straight. Probably hoping to repeat today, but how hairy was it out there particularly? You hadn't had the break point until deep in the third set. Then you were down a match point in the breaker. It's about as close as it gets, right?

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, I wouldn't say it wasn't as like -- there's a lot of matches where I don't have a break point, but I feel like I'm just nowhere near having one.

I feel like -- it didn't feel like that today. The whole time I felt like there was going to be a break coming, and it never came, but I felt like -- I mean, I could have set a record today for how many times I was one point away from getting a break point and didn't win it. It had to be at least, like, 12, 13, 14 times I had 50-30, 30-All or deuce and just never got the chance.

He played really well in those situations to get out of those tight games. A lot of times I didn't do too much wrong, but you know, I just kept holding serve, kept telling myself there's a break coming. Never came, but fought through that breaker.

Q. Taylor and Coco, regardless from win or loss, and I'm sure both of you would have preferred to play just straight sets wins, obviously, but as you go into Melbourne in a couple of weeks, just playing three sets in three hours, how do you think that kind of helps you heading into the rest of Australia?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I mean, for me I need it. Like, I actually really need it.

Like I said before, my off-season was mainly focused on rehabbing. So I was hitting, but never hitting for more than an hour to an hour and a half.

I played two practice sets the entirety of the off-season, just singular sets. So I'm not very match fit. I think that obviously we would like to get it done in straights, but for me, it's absolutely what I need to get ready for Australia.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I would agree. I think for me obviously in different -- I had a full pre-season, but I think it's just good to experience those pressure moments in the season, early in a season. Especially this is my only event before Australia, so just trying to work out all those things, but the goal is to hopefully do well in both events.

So I would prefer to win in straights, but yeah, it doesn't hurt to go three. More so when you're on the winning side of it, though.

Q. I'll address this to Taylor, but maybe anyone here has thoughts. Recently there's been a lot of kind of discussion about the speed of courts and particularly hard courts, and particularly at the end of last year with Shanghai and Paris some of them were slower. I'm curious, what do you think hard court tennis should be? Should there be variety in the court speeds? Certain balls, do they not work on the court, or should they be fast all the time?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I'll try to not make this a 20-minute answer. Personally I've talked to a lot of other players about this. I personally think -- there was places they slowed down the courts. Shanghai was a joke how much they slowed it down. I guess Paris was slower.

But to me, honestly, and most players that I've talked to agree with me on this, I don't think they've slowed down the courts that much over the years. I just think the balls are so much slower.

There's so much just softer, so they just lose so much speed when they hit the court. Especially I feel like the

quality has gone down. They get so big so much quicker, I feel. Yeah, I don't think there should be situations like, I guess, today. Even today, it's not a fast court, but the balls get big.

I'm serving as hard as I can, hitting my spot, and then hitting the next five balls as hard as I possibly can corner to corner, and my opponent is just chipping and giving me nothing to work with, and you can't put the ball away.

There should be variance in the speeds, but at a certain point there has to be reward when you're being aggressive and taking risks.

I think it's more so the balls than the courts, to be honest.

Q. Anyone else have any thoughts on the balls?

No?

CHRISTIAN HARRISON: I agree with Taylor. I think it's the balls other than the court speeds. Everyone always talks about it.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah.

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