

United Cup

Tuesday, 6 January 2026

Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Team Greece

Stefanos Tsitsipas

Maria Sakkari

Press Conference

Team Greece - 2

Team Great Britain - 0

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, both of you. Could you give your thoughts on your individual matches.

MARIA SAKKARI: I mean, personally I think it was a great win for both of us. It's never easy to play players, in Stefanos' case, correct me if I'm wrong, that has nothing to lose, a great player that went out on the court and just played great tennis. But Stefanos showed that he's an amazing champion.

For myself, I just feel like I had four losses against her, so it was about time to take a win and just feel like I found a way to beat her, because it can play with your mind, it can trick you a lot of times.

She's a great player. I'm very happy that my season has started with two great wins.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Actually it's more interesting to me to talk about Maria's match. Why? It's interesting seeing it as an outside perspective as a supporter. Seeing my match from my own eyes, very different. You get a much clearer view from outside.

I can imagine how difficult it is for Maria getting into a match like that with Emma. Obviously not having a good record doesn't help in that case.

But I'm really proud of Maria today because she showed incredible determination. She had faith and belief in moments that it's very easy to kind of lose your shit, excuse my language. I get it as an athlete and tennis player. I get it.

On that end, stayed extremely well composed, played in her own terms. I really admire that. That was excellent.

MARIA SAKKARI: I had a great coach. Tommy is always there. Having his input was amazing.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: When it comes from the heart



with passion, it's nice, I think from both ends.

THE MODERATOR: We'll do questions.

Q. I have to ask about that. I enjoyed your coaching.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Could you hear any of it?

Q. Yeah, it's mic'd up. How much did you enjoy that, maybe not enjoy because it's tense, but did you like that feeling of being on that side?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I think it fits my creativity. It's one thing playing tennis, it's another thing seeing it from the outside. It feels different.

It's always so much easier when you watch it from outside. You know what I mean? It's so much easier to give directions, tell someone to do that, do that. It's a very psychological sport so you have to understand what the player is feeling, their emotions, what they're going through. It's not always giving tactics. Tactics are not always going to be working or reliable.

I don't want to talk about coaching. As a player, I get Maria's feelings and I can correlate to the emotions and what you're going through. I'm just trying to navigate them as smoothly as I possibly can.

She really showed incredible tennis today, a lot of improvements she has made to her game. My whole attention and focus on it was to how can we maximize on the shots. The shots are there. She has those shots. How can we utilize those to take them to the maximum. She actually did that with brave tennis and going for the kill.

MARIA SAKKARI: Even now it shows how great his tennis IQ is. It's incredible. I always played with him. I always spoke to him while we were playing. I always knew he has a great tennis IQ.

Tom is always there. Just to have a different voice and a voice like from Stef, who is one of the best players in the world, it's amazing. I'm so grateful honestly. Thank you for today. It really means a lot.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Thank you for your words.

MARIA SAKKARI: It's great that it comes from another player that really understands how you feel that specific moment.



Q. You mentioned she had a good record against you. Coming into a match like this, how much do you try to change what you're doing compared to the last matches or stick to the way you play knowing I'm better than how I played in those matches before?

MARIA SAKKARI: We tweaked a little bit obviously the tactic. I feel like it was more about she does the same thing against me like any other time. I feel like it was more about me being brave in those big moments.

In that second set I feel like I took my foot off the gas a little bit. I was too careful. With his instructions and his help, I was really going after it, but with common sense, knowing what I'm doing.

I'm not going to reveal the tactic obviously. It really paid off, for sure.

Q. Generally speaking, after coming off a long season, long off-season, with the first two matches tonight both being three sets, do you think it helps you get into the swing of things?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I think it helps, first of all, building the capacity in your lungs to withstand matches like this. One thing that is going through your mind when you're playing a long match like that is, this is such a great preparation before the Aussie Open. The format is different there, best-of-five.

Getting tough matches in makes you a better player, improves your IQ as a player. You get to try things. You get to experiment with a few things you're not entirely sure about when you're on the court.

In my case, the more I get to spend time on the court, the more I get to figure out certain things. Matches always help. I'm a matches person. I've always been. It feeds my creativity. It feeds my zone of understanding that should be done more and maybe we should improve this. It always works as feedback.

It is important having matches like this before a big slam.

Q. Maria, I thought you served really well in key moments. What has the process been like? It feels like you've rediscovered something with that shot.

MARIA SAKKARI: Yeah, I mean, we've made some changes. We started in Beijing actually. Then I skipped Wuhan quallies because I was changing my serve and my forehand and I was not ready to play. We stayed in Wuhan just trying to improve that change. Obviously we had more time during pre-season.

Some technical things that I feel like because I played too many tournaments last year, you get into bad habits,

then you don't have the time to just improve, turn them into good habits.

Made some changes. I haven't seen my stats, but it feels like first-serve percentage was high. No double-faults. I was hitting my spots. So it was good. Not hitting 180 kilometers per hour. But that's what I want right now, hitting my spots with lower speed.

Q. You talked about the difficulties of the past few months. Emotionally how was it being away from the tour? You were watching at the Athens tournament. How did you get to a good place with everything?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: The most painful experience was at the Athens Open, not getting to play. It really hurt me a lot, given that it would be my home tournament, the thing that I always dreamt as a child to play a home tournament one day. It didn't happen. It came in all such a bad moment with my back. So it was a very sensitive period for me emotionally.

But the good thing is that I've processed those emotions in advance and I accepted that I'm not playing in it for the better. I had a great chance, great opportunity playing at the Davis Cup in September with a full crowd at the Olympic stadium. That was honestly the biggest blessing because these are the moments that we strive for as tennis players, especially coming from small countries like Greece. We want attention like that for our sport. It helps a lot get recognition for what we're doing. We don't get big events of tennis in Athens and in Greece, generally speaking.

The absence from the court teaches you so much about what else could happen, what other routes you can take besides tennis. In that particular moment of my life, I wouldn't see tennis competing wasn't something that I was doing. I was trying to get back. Training was mostly something that I was in my daily life.

The most important thing, what I understood through the last couple of months, is health. If you manage to get healthy, then competition is fun, your daily life is fun. If you're struggling with health-related problems, it can have a big toll on you mentally.

Thankfully I have other things I did in my life, ventures and other interesting things in my life that could occupy that space that I'm used to my entire life.

Q. In general, you guys have known each other for a long time. You've had great highs in your careers, difficult periods. What is it like knowing you're both on this path doing kind of the same thing from the same country? Is that reassuring and nice?

MARIA SAKKARI: I mean, it's amazing because I feel like it's unfortunate in a way that it's just the two of us. At

the same time it's also great that we know that we are just moving towards... We're at the same position right now. We're trying to get back to where we were.

It's crazy coincidence that we have the same career high ranking as well. It's nuts. I'm very proud of what Stef has achieved. I feel like we always helped each other. If we didn't help each other, then I feel like we wouldn't be a good role model for Greece.

We're really hoping we can influence young kids and have kids coming up, just grow the sport as we've done the last few years in Greece.

As I said in my previous interviews, I personally have full belief in Stef. Like, I put my hand on fire that he's going to get back to where he was.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Oh, thank you (smiling).

MARIA SAKKARI: I truly mean it. I say that to everyone. Like, I don't know when it's going to happen. It doesn't really matter. He's too good not to be where he belongs.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: God bless you.

I mean, Maria made a good point there, trying to grow tennis in Greece. You already saw we made it grow so much that we even got a Stef Jr. in the team. That's how far he has come.

I'm personally very proud of Maria. She has shown resilience, determination, great elements that are important in sports, global sports, not just sports in Greece specifically. I feel like a role model for a lot of kids, not just in Greece.

It's important to have role models like that that can influence their own way through sports.

Maria was the reason I really believed at first. She's obviously slightly older than me. She played the breakthrough first. That reignited a new flame inside of me to be able to follow her footsteps and believe in myself that I can do that, as well.

One thing that I'm grateful for is she initiated that step for me. I can't but not be proud that we're both in this together. In my opinion, there is zero competitiveness. It's literally going into that route together and wishing that we both achieve what we want to achieve through our sport. The most important of course staying healthy throughout our route. Trust me, it has been such a painful experience, both Maria and me as well, she has been through her own stuff as well. It's never easy. Sometimes I freeze, I never know how to react on these type of situations.

I wish health and a successful route of positive things for

Maria. I'm there silently supporting on the side anytime.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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