

United Cup

Wednesday, 7 January 2026
Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Team USA

Captain Michael Russell

Coco Gauff

Taylor Fritz

Christian Harrison

Mackenzie McDonald

Varvara Lepchenko

Nicole Melichar-Martinez

Press Conference

Team USA - 2

Team Greece - 1

THE MODERATOR: Michael, do you want to start with your thoughts on the team's performance?

MICHAEL RUSSELL: Yeah, I mean, they fought exceptionally hard like they do. The support from the whole team was amazing. It literally came down to one point, and that's what we did the last three matches. Everyone gets behind one another, and really proud how everyone played.

You know, at the end of the day, we're going to Sydney.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Christian and Coco, obviously this is the third straight time that it's come down to mixed doubles. I know you guys, it's the first time playing at this tournament. Just kind of speak to what it means to clinch all these ties and your spot in Sydney.

CHRISTIAN HARRISON: It means a lot. Nice to have the team around. They really helped us through, especially me, I feel like in that match.

Like Mike said, we're all there. We needed some strategy adjustments. Everybody was speaking up. We were just ready to try to execute as good as we could. It's nice to come through.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I agree. I think it was a team effort, especially in the tiebreaker. I never thought I would get doubles advice from Taylor, but it was actually



successful. I appreciate it.

I think in those moments it's important because literally in tiebreaks every point matters more so than maybe in a three-set format. Yeah, it definitely came down to the wire. So, yeah, I appreciate the whole team talking to us, pumping us up, and seeing things that maybe we couldn't see on the court.

Q. What was that advice, or is it a secret?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, it worked, so we'll keep it a secret.

Q. Coco, obviously next round you'll either be playing Australia or Poland. I know you've played Iga several times, and it will be your first matchup against Maya. Speak about the prospect of playing either one of them.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah. I'll start with Iga. I mean, obviously we've played each other a lot of times. Last year I had a good match against her. Yeah, I'm looking forward to the battle. I feel like when I'm playing great tennis, it puts a lot of pressure on them. Yeah, I'm looking forward to that.

And Maya, I've never played her, but obviously a great talent, can play really well, ball strike can be really clean. Either way, I'll have my hands full, but I'm just excited to go to Sydney and hopefully play some good tennis.

Q. Taylor, you ran into a pretty hot Stef today. I think he was serving at 84% in the first set. Just your thoughts on that match and how you individually turn it around heading into the semis.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, it was a bit of a weird one, because I felt like I was for the most part playing pretty well. I feel like I kind of had all the shots that I needed. What I was missing balls, they didn't feel like, I guess, bad misses. They felt good. I felt like I was striking the ball well, serving well.

He served really well the first set. Just kind of a tough game that I played to get broken, but I just felt really good about my game during the match. I kind of the whole time up until it was over felt like I was going to find a way and win the match, because like I said, I feel like everything was kind of working for me, but just some errors at some bad times. Just a bit unlike me.



He played well, served really well when he was kind of down in games and needed it. But yeah, I mean, I had looks, and his serve games didn't convert. Then when he got the chances on my serve, he took them. I just wasn't as clean as I would like to be on some of those moments.

Q. Mike, the challenge of moving city now from Perth to Sydney. I know there's a travel day and then a practice day. As captain, what are things that you can do to help the team adjust?

MICHAEL RUSSELL: Yeah, I'm just getting comfortable with the conditions. It's a three-hour time change and five- to six-hour flight. So it's just important that obviously we all hydrate well -- I'm sure Taylor has heard that plenty of times -- with the flight because you lose a lot of water and get comfortable in the conditions.

It's more humid in Sydney. Balls will be a little different. So I think a couple of us are going to practice tomorrow night even when we arrive. Then we have a good couple of hours to get used to that center court in Sydney and get ready.

Q. Coco, your serving performance today was much improved from the one on Monday. Obviously Monday was a bit of a blip. Was there anything you changed in between that last game and this one?

COCO GAUFF: I think just mentality. I think just going for bigger targets, making her play knowing that I off the ground can hang in there or beat almost everyone. So just adjusting.

It was difficult like with the first match with the sun on the other side. I don't think I made the right adjustments, and it was negative. Today it was the opposite.

Yeah, I think just being positive and the mentality is everything when it comes to that, yeah.

Q. You've both had three really good quality singles matches here against good opponents. They've both had plenty of stakes and pressure attached. Do you feel like this team-orientated format is transferrable to preparation for other Grand Slam tournaments, or is it Perth and the United Cup a bit more unique given where it lies in the tennis calendar at the start of a season?

TAYLOR FRITZ: For me personally, I always love the team events. I like the fact -- obviously as well I think it's good because we're all coming off of an offseason. Showing up here, you're guaranteed to get the two matches obviously. If I'm playing somewhere else, I show up and lose that first match, I don't get a chance to play again. Now I get to play another one.

So it's really good to start the year, but I mean, typically I am in favor of a lot of the team events. I think it's a lot of fun.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I would agree. I think it's great to start the year. I think the appeal is, for example, instead of leaving Perth on a bad note in that singles, I could play better today.

Obviously the team format I think does create that pressure. Not only in singles, but in mixed. At the start of that tiebreaker I did feel the nerves for the first time this whole event, but yeah, I think it's just feeling the nerves over and over again, and you learn how to I guess manage them.

Yeah, hopefully I can be in a later stage of a Grand Slam and maybe feel those same nerves. I think thanks to the experience today, I'll know how to manage them even better.

Q. I'm just curious, what is your guys' opinion -- this is for anyone -- your opinion about the time-out feature of the mixed doubles?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, me personally, I think it's cool. I liked it. Last year I think you could only use it on your serve, right? So I like that you can do it on anyone. Greece's timing was interesting, but it worked.

Yeah, I think it's a cool feature. I would hope to see it in more United Cups.

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