

# Australian Open

Wednesday, 17 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Storm Hunter

Press Conference



S. HUNTER/L. Siegemund

6-4, 3-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Storm, congratulations. This dream run continues. Just explain how you're feeling right now.

STORM HUNTER: Thanks. Yeah, I'm a bit tired, to be honest. Yeah, I feel good. It was a pretty tough match out there. Laura is a huge competitor. I knew going into the match she wasn't going to give me anything. I had to really earn it.

Yeah, it was tough obviously being a break up in the second, and then losing that and then being 4-1 up going back to 4-3. I just tried to hold my nerve.

And to get the win and to be in the third round of the Australian Open, yeah, it's a dream come true. Obviously I have been playing for a long time. It's my sixth main-draw Australian Open. It almost feels sweeter this way because I have done it the hard way, lose first round. To get through now it just feels really special.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Career-best in singles. How does today compare against everything else you have done in your career?**

STORM HUNTER: It's definitely up there with probably one of the best feelings. Obviously I've had some amazing success in doubles, but I feel like this, yeah, is a little bit different. I feel in doubles I probably believed in myself more that I can achieve these things. Singles maybe not believing in myself.

Like I said, I've had a lot of opportunities. I have played in main-draw slams from when I was 19, 20, and kind of couldn't really get over the first rounds. To do it now I think it just means that much more, because I have had those experiences. Yeah, it's up there, to do it in Australia, as well, it's amazing, like, the crowd was absolutely incredible. They really helped me today.

I tried to use them as much as possible, too. Yeah, to make the third round here is, it's amazing.

**Q. Have you ever faced the scenario where you've got now singles, mixed doubles, and doubles, all at one time?**

STORM HUNTER: Yeah, last year I qualified for French and Wimbledon and won my first round in Roland Garros and then had doubles and mixed.

Obviously making third round it's a little bit different, but I'm prepared for that. I think it's just a bonus, to be honest. If you're winning, it's a great problem to have. I feel pretty good. My body, I'm obviously just trying to manage my, yeah, recovery right now and time, just trying to stay focused.

It's still a long 10 days to go, I guess. I have obviously still singles to go, and have goals in doubles I really want to achieve too. I'm just trying to ride the wave. Doesn't happen every day. Yeah, I'm just enjoying it right now.

**Q. John Cain Arena is turning into a special place for Australians. We have seen so many Australians come from behind in this tournament, Kokkinakis and Ajla. What is it about John Cain? What's it like at court level, how much it gives you a lift?**

STORM HUNTER: Yeah, I think it's one of those courts, I think because it's ground passes. I saw the passionate fans come in. Obviously Rod Laver and Margaret Court, the tickets are more expensive so it's maybe more for people that love watching tennis. I feel like John Cain just gets the crowd that wants to get behind the Aussies.

Today I felt the same. I felt there's a lot of Aussie fans in the stands, and they were, you know, chanting my name, which was, yeah, which was awesome.

I think yesterday was a crazy day for the Australians on that court. You know, I just kept trying to, yeah, believe in myself and use that energy. I think in the second set there I just dropped my energy levels a little bit. And in the third, you know, even my coach was yelling out, like, Come on, you're an Australia, you're in Australia, use that, use that advantage, because it is so special what we have here.

Like you said, John Cain Arena, because it's ground passes and it's a big court, it's loud. I love that. It's an



awesome experience. I definitely thrived off that today.

**Q. Can you quantify how much of a difference it makes in matches? Is it 15%, 20%, 30%?**

STORM HUNTER: Oh, I don't know, I couldn't put, like, a number on it, but definitely it helps a lot. Like, it's definitely, I think, if you speak to the others, like, yeah, it helps a lot, because sometimes you'll get down on yourself and you just have people yelling at you, it's okay, next point, next point. Every time you win a point they're in your corner.

Honestly, I think it helps, yeah, like, maybe 30% at least, maybe even more. Because you kind of don't have time to get down on yourself because they're right there in your corner and you just want to win one point to get kind of the energy going again, which that's what I kind of felt today. I was up 4-1 in the third and using the energy really well. Got back to 4-3 so everyone went a bit quiet. I just had to win one point just to get everyone back up and get myself going again.

Yeah, I thrive in those environments and loved it.

**Q. de Minaur spoke earlier about you, had some kind words and said he hopes your performances this tournament may make you consider playing singles or make it more of a priority. Is that on your radar this year?**

STORM HUNTER: Yeah, definitely even before the Australian Open, that was on my radar, as well, just trying to prioritize a few more singles events.

It is hard, because a lot of the 1000s are two-week events. I've done a really good job to get myself to No. 1 in the world in doubles. I don't want to give that up too easily, as well. But, you know, I'm definitely not young anymore, I'm not planning on playing forever. While my body is feeling good, I do want to give singles a good crack. I'm really lucky to have Nicole Pratt in my corner. Hopefully she can travel with me a little bit this year to help with my singles, which would be awesome.

Yeah, I'm definitely trying to fit in more singles weeks so I'm going to have to sacrifice some doubles here and there. Haven't quite worked that out yet, but I think once we finish here, we'll kind of sit down and reassess the schedule.

**Q. Not many people have got the better of you in the doubles court in the last 12 months. Laura has had a couple good results. Did that make today's results even more special perhaps?**

STORM HUNTER: Yeah, a little bit, to be honest.  
(Laughter.)

Obviously losing WTA Finals in Cancun last year to Laura in a super-tiebreak. And then recently the United Cup was a heartbreaker, 15-30 in the super-tiebreak, as well. Even last year I knew Laura was playing really well. She was playing great doubles and also had a lot of success in singles. I think she cracked into the top 100 kind of back end of last year again.

So I knew, like, today was going to be tough. I know she has that experience. I knew she wasn't going to get, you know, in awe of the crowd as well. She likes those arenas even if they're not cheering for her. She likes being in those stages and she was always going to fight.

Yeah, it was definitely I wanted to get revenge, more for United Cup last week. It was definitely for Australia because that was a heartbreaker. When you're playing for your country it means so much more.

Yeah, that one definitely hurt. It was nice to get a little bit of a revenge today.

**Q. In the third round, you get Barbora Krejckova again, doubles person who you've come up against. What's that going to be like?**

STORM HUNTER: Yeah, it's going to be a tough match. She's obviously a Grand Slam champion in singles and doubles. Great player. I think she controls the ball really well. I wouldn't say she's super-aggressive, but she just is able to control the ball, manipulate where she wants to hit it, use the backhand slice a little bit, her forehand, I think she can hit any spot.

She kind of reminds me of Ash a little bit, Ash Barty, the way she plays.

Yeah, it's honestly going to be a tough match, and I'm up for it, though. I think it's going to be a good challenge. Yeah, I feel like I'm playing well. I just got to back myself. I play an aggressive game style and try and not give her the chance to dictate the court.

She has a lot of experience and she's not going to be fazed by anything. I'm just going to focus on me and go out and enjoy it on Friday.

**Q. On court, your interview with Jelena, she seemed to kind of maybe push a button or two. Your eyes were welling up a bit there. You said, you know, you were going to cry about how much your team meant to you. After the match, behind closed doors, what was the experience like for you and the emotions?**

STORM HUNTER: Yeah, it was really nice to see, yeah, my husband, my parents, Pratty and Fish. These are people that have been in my life for obviously a very long time. Like I said on court, obviously my parents have been there from day one and have always supported my

dreams and goals no matter what.

So to have them here is super, super special. Then my husband, we have been together almost 10 years now, which is, yeah, a very long time. We met when I was 19 and just starting out, becoming a professional tennis player.

He's seen it all from when I was injured working, you know, here in Melbourne as a coach at Wesley college earning no money (smiling), no ranking. Yeah, so for him, he's always also been super supportive, always pushed me and challenged me to be better as well.

Pratty, Nicole Pratt, and Ron Fisher, they've been in my tennis journey since I was -- Fish since I was 13, 14, and Pratty since I was 17. I just feel really lucky that I have these people here with me this week, and yeah, to kind of share that with them, it was amazing, definitely a few tears behind closed doors.

Yeah, I just feel really lucky, because these are the people that have always believed in me no matter what. They have been here from the beginning. Yeah, that just makes it more special.

**Q. A bit more upbeat, seemed like you were really pumped up in that third set, and I think you were saying "Let's go" a few times. "Let's go." Is that kind of your catch cry now?**

STORM HUNTER: I don't know, to be honest. I just said whatever came out. I wasn't really thinking. I was just trying to let out positive energy and get the crowd a little bit more involved, you know, just, yeah, try and create a bit of atmosphere for myself, because I think at the end of the second I was a bit flat, you know, kind of lost a few games in a row pretty quickly.

I wanted to come out and just kind of reset and start again. You know, I was just yelling out whatever kind of came to me. But yeah, like I said, Pratty was like -- you know, at the end of the day, she didn't have to say any coaching. She was just, like, You're an Aussie. Come on. Be tough, be tough. Good energy. That's all you need to do. Just fight out there.

I mean, she's our Billie Jean King Cup coach, and she's seen how I perform in Billie Jean King Cup situations and how I thrive in that environment, so I think she was just trying to, yeah, get me to be kind of in that environment out there on John Cain today.

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