

Laver Cup

Thursday, 23 September 2021

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Team World

Reilly Opelka

John Isner

Nick Kyrgios

Jack Sock

Press Conference

An interview with:

TEAM WORLD

JASON GOODALL: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the official press conference for Team World. I'm Jason Goodall. I will be your host asking the captain, the vice-captain, and each of the individual players questions initially before handing over to Louie for the rest of the press conference that will be done virtually.

The order of play is out for Day 1. Casper Ruud will take on Reilly Opelka for Team World in the first match of the day which gets underway at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Then Matteo Berrettini will play against Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Night session gets underway at 7:00 p.m. Eastern, featuring Andrey Rublev against Diego Schwartzman, as far as the singles are concerned. And then we have some men's doubles, Alexander Zverev and Matteo Berrettini for Team Europe up against John Isner and Denis Shapovalov for Team World.

Let's start with the captain. John, what was your thought process behind putting these players up on Day 1?

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: A combination of people who are most experienced with the Laver Cup, obviously people that have come off some good results as well as trying to make some type of assumption about who we would be playing and seeing, you know, hoping we get off to a good start. You know, we want to get out there and get some points tomorrow. I think we have put a good group together.

JASON GOODALL: I guess the big question is, is it going to be fourth-time lucky for you?

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: You know, I sure hope so.



LAVÉR CUP

It's been so close every year. We could taste it. I know that all of us are hungry and eager. We've got a good mix.

We've got people that can take the racquet out of their hands, and that's the plan. Also, we've got some people that haven't been here before, and I think that combination gives us good energy.

JASON GOODALL: Patrick McEnroe, vice-captain, Reilly and Felix making their debuts, what advice have you given them about what to expect as far as the overall atmosphere is concerned?

VICE-CAPTAIN PATRICK McENROE: Well, they're going to get a lot of advice from their fellow players, No. 1, because they have been there before, so we have already started that. They have plenty of experience playing some big, big matches, including at the US Open recently.

As John said, I think we have a great mix of some veterans and some youth, excitement. I like that combination a lot.

JASON GOODALL: Reilly Opelka, a captain needs the team to get off to a good start. He's put you in first. How does that feel to be spearheading the team?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, I mean, I think it's great. I'm really excited to get out there. We have had some great practices, and I'm going to go out there and do my thing tomorrow. There is no secrets with my game. I want to bring some good energy and get the team off to a good start.

JASON GOODALL: Felix, you're up against Matteo Berrettini tomorrow. You guys know each other's games well. You have played fairly recently and I think three times previously. What makes life difficult for you when you come up against Matteo?

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Yeah, he has one of the great serves in the game right now. You know, huge forehand also. But I feel like, yeah, the last time I played I was able to neutralize his serve, start off the rallies pretty well, and then I kind of, yeah, have it on my terms, I would say. That's what I will need to do tomorrow.

JASON GOODALL: Diego, how would you describe the conditions on the court out there? How might those conditions suit your game best?

DIEGO SCHWARTZMAN: Well, I think the conditions



... when all is said, we're done.®

are good for me. The court is slow this year. I felt great these few practices, you know, so far.

I have to be ready for tomorrow. Maybe Andrey Rublev have big shots, he's playing very fast, and under these conditions I have a few opportunities to keep, you know, rolling on the points.

Let's see what happen tomorrow, but the conditions for me are good.

JASON GOODALL: John, you have the last 14 points in total over the course of the last three Laver Cups for Team World, Mr. Versatility as far as singles and doubles is concerned. What is it about this event that seems to bring out the best in your tennis?

JOHN ISNER: I just like the team atmosphere. I mean, I think all of us do. I played four years of college tennis. It's very special. I played a lot of Davis Cup. It's special when you play for more than just yourself. Everyone would agree with that assessment, also.

To get to play in atmospheres like this in Prague, Chicago, Geneva, the buildings were just absolutely electric. It makes you, you know, play really well and go out there, gives you a lot of adrenaline. It's just something you can't quite replicate every other day out on tour.

We're going to cherish that, and it goes without saying we're going to need this crowd to be on our side big time, and we're looking forward to that.

JASON GOODALL: Denis, your third Laver Cup. What did you learn in the first two that would allow you to bring your best tennis in this one?

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, I think just the experience of playing this event, obviously it's a little bit of a different atmosphere, different than any other tournament. So for sure just the experience from the other years. Hopefully I can use that to help me feel more comfortable this year.

JASON GOODALL: Nick, you obviously excel in the Laver Cup. You're a Celtics fan. We are here in Boston. What's it mean to you to be playing here this weekend?

NICK KYRGIOS: Yeah, it's super special. As John alluded to, we love playing team events. We don't get them too often. To be sitting up here with a great group of guys, especially I'm close to a lot of these guys here, you guys, Reilly, and Felix, I'm super excited for them. They are going to be in this event for many, many years to come.

I think this is our time. I think with the Big 3 from Europe obviously sitting with injury, all that, I think this is our best shot. I think the crowd, I think we're the more well-known

team. I think the crowd will be right behind us, and I think from the get-go the energy will be right there.

Obviously the Celtics, close connection, but, you know, we've got a job to do this week. I think we have a great setup and great team to do it.

JASON GOODALL: I think it's going to be fun. Sitting next to Jack Sock, the alternate for the team, 12 matches so far, 16 points earned so far for Team World. Are you injury-free? How excited are you to be perhaps involved this weekend?

JACK SOCK: I am injury-free. Obviously I had an unfortunate way to go out of the Open a few weeks ago, but I think I'm playing great tennis. I love this event. Whatever role I'm in, I cherish this whole week.

You know, I have had my chance to play and be on the court playing the matches, and to be the alternate and kind of practice guy this week is, honestly, it's a blast for me just being here with these guys.

I like all these guys a ton. Just to be in this atmosphere, it was an easy decision for me to come and be a part of the team in any way I could.

Whatever I can do to help, you know, I'm all about it, and I'm a team guy through and through at the end. Yeah, whatever, towels or water or hitting, whatever it is, I'm there.

JASON GOODALL: It's a blast for us to watch. What about those celebrations? Have you been working on anything courtside that will bring a little bit of entertainment to the weekend?

JACK SOCK: I will leave that to your guys' imagination. You'll just have to wait and see.

JASON GOODALL: Best of luck, gentlemen. I will hand you over to Louie now.

Q. I will put this out to John Isner and Reilly. Johnny Mac talked about taking the racquet out of your opponents' hand, and you guys, obviously with your serve on any given day, can take out anybody. Could you talk about the importance of that and what that would mean this weekend to have a big serving day here and there?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, as Reilly said earlier, there is not many secrets to our games. It starts and definitely starts with our serve, try to create scoreboard pressure, which is a very real thing, especially against players of Europe's caliber.

I think our plan is to try to, you know, keep these matches close, make them about a few points here and

there, and hopefully we can try to win those points.

We're servebots, that's what we do. You know, as I said, try to hold serve as much as possible. We don't want to, probably don't want to be rallying with these guys too much. They are all top 10 in the world for a reason. But as Captain McEnroe said, we have a lot of, you know, power and weapons on our side, and we just have to utilize those and hope that it's good enough.

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, yeah, I agree. That's the benefit to being a bot and also the downside. But you're 6-All in the third or 6-All in the fifth with anybody in the world, and by "anybody," I mean anybody, could be a Top-10 guy, could be a guy 150, 250, but that's the upside (smiling).

Q. This question is for Nick Kyrgios. Good to see you, Nick. As you said, you're here to play a great event, Laver Cup, but you're such a Celtics fan. It's an incredible heritage they have, going way, way back to Auerbach, Russell, Bird. Could you just talk about your love for the Celtics? Do you know much about the heritage and what makes them special?

NICK KYRGIOS: Well, yeah, I had an experience to play in Chicago in the Bulls arena and that was a special moment. Obviously you had Scottie Pippen watching us play on the sideline, and you see the banners hanging from the roof.

I think everyone sitting here knows how special it is to be in such a great arena with so much history and so much sporting greatness to come out of this building, to be a part of it. I have played in Madison Square Garden, I've played in the United Center. I've played in the TD Garden now. It's becoming -- as I said, I never thought when I was 12 to 14 that I'd be playing, representing the world with some good mates, some good friends. It's a special opportunity to go out and do something special.

There is going to be some Celtics players watching as well, and that's added pressure. But again, I'm going to try to keep everything internal, lean on these guys when I'm out there. It's a very pressure situation. I'll just go out there and try and give the greatest performance I can give on the day.

If we can come out with a win, it's going to make it even more special that we did it in such a special place as well.

Q. A question for Nick. As let's say a veteran, along with a couple of others, what would you tell someone, whether it's fans or newbies in the team, on what to expect from Laver Cup from the three days of play?

NICK KYRGIOS: Well, I have played this four times, I

guess a veteran of the event. I don't usually cry much when I lose matches, and, you know, I went through a couple tough, tough losses here against Roger in Prague, and Jack had to kind of come up to me and comfort me in that moment, so it definitely brings out an array of emotions that you don't feel, I don't feel when I'm playing any other event. Davis Cup obviously similar to this. I think this carries a bit more weight.

But, you know, I know Reilly and Felix are extremely confident in their games at the moment. They are playing some excellent tennis. They have their game plans. They know what to do under pressure and how to execute.

It's a lot more weight carried, but I'm confident in everyone on this table. I'm sitting with some of the best players in the world, and they know what to do. They have won many, many matches.

Just go out there and enjoy it. You don't know how long you're going to be at this level and how many times you're going to play Laver Cup. I'm just going to embrace it again and these guys will enjoy it.

Q. A question for Captain John. John, from your personal point of view, which do you think are the main differences between the passion you have as a tennis player and now the passion as a captain and coach of the Team World at Laver Cup?

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: I think it's pretty similar, actually. I love team events. I played team sports as a kid. Loved Davis Cup, had a lot more meaning when I was playing it, I think.

So an event like this brings something new to the table for our sport, and I think it's awesome. You know, we get to sort of rally behind each other. Obviously in tennis there is not coaching very often, so it's just nice to be part of it in a small way for this week.

Rod Laver was my idol. Roger Federer obviously is a total class act. He spearheaded this, getting this event started.

To me, it's like a win-win for everyone. It's a no-brainer. But similar energy from when I played: intense.

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