

Laver Cup

Friday, 24 September 2021

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Reilly Opelka

Patrick McEnroe

Press Conference

C. RUUD/R. Opelka

6-3, 7-6

Team Europe - 1

Team World - 0

THE MODERATOR: A tough match. Can you just talk about what it felt like to make your Laver Cup debut and the match today against Casper.

REILLY OPELKA: Casper I thought was great. He came out firing, and I thought his level was extremely high throughout the entire match.

I was just kind of hanging on, trying to survive, and possibly turn things around. I didn't play the breakpoints so well, and, you know, I think that was the biggest difference maker in the end. Casper was on it. He was the better player.

THE MODERATOR: Patrick, your thoughts on today's first match?

VICE-CAPTAIN PATRICK McENROE: Yeah, I think Casper was extremely consistent, took advantage of a couple of opportunities he had. Reilly was able to get himself a couple of chances in the second set, and obviously if he had converted one or two of those, we'd be in a super-tiebreak.

Was happy with the effort was there, the intensity was there. Now we've just got to get back out there and see if we can get one now.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Reilly, a big moment for you to play this first rubber of the Laver Cup for this year. Some of your thoughts as the match progressed, what were you thinking in an effort to try and get past Casper?

REILLY OPELKA: The conditions is the slowest condition I have ever played in, the combo with the court and the ball. Just tried to make some adjustments, use the serve and volley, go a little bigger on the first serve



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and look to be more aggressive.

You know, I thought I did a better job of that. I had some looks to break and just didn't come my way. I thought I at least gave myself a shot there for a guy that was playing in a condition which suits him better than me and playing extremely well. He's top 10 in the world for a reason.

Q. Do you think that maybe today one of the most difficult things was to return Casper Ruud's serve? He served quite well with high percentage of first and second serve that was a little bit complicated maybe for you today?

REILLY OPELKA: No, I thought the biggest complication was just actually how many balls were coming back in play. I mean, I got broken twice in one set. That doesn't happen too often.

You know, if you watch me play, I'm not known to be winning a lot of these first-serve and second-serve return points. But, you know, I bet the stat lines show that I won a lot less first-serve and second-serve serving points, and I think that was more of a concern than the return.

Q. What was the experience like, having the guys come from the bench actually coming up to you, giving you advice in addition to John and Patrick and all that there? It's obviously something that you would not have experienced before.

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, it's great. It's comforting, for sure. At the end of the day, you know, I have been -- I have played 25, 20 weeks this year. I know my game the best. I have the best feel for what's going on out there, but it is nice to have, you know, Johnny Mac in your ear.

I mean, one thing that you can tell what made Johnny Mac so great with his mindset, he's very optimistic. You know, things went south early, and, you know, he was just very optimistic like with how to turn things around. He got me thinking right away for what I need to do to turn things around. And I almost did. Like I said, it didn't go my way, but that's the sport for you.

Q. You also played Casper in Cincinnati not so long ago. Did you notice any differences in his game from then?

REILLY OPELKA: Complete different court. Cincinnati was fast and live. This was slow and dead. Definitely the most extreme condition I have played here in terms of speed of ball on court. Completely different.

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Q. You met Casper a few times now in different conditions, as you say. What impressed you the most about the young Norwegian?

REILLY OPELKA: Today, everything.

Q. What are your feelings, having a tennis legend like John McEnroe as captain?

REILLY OPELKA: It's great. You know, he's, like you said, you said it best, he's a legend. He's fun to be around, he's competitive as hell. That's something I think we all share in the locker room.

Like I said, he's very realistic and he's optimistic. He's a straight shooter, tells you like it is. When we're setting the lineup, we're doing things right. He's not kissing everyone's ass, telling us how great we are. He's shooting it straight, telling us like it is.

That's how I like it. That's how we all like it. You know, he's a legend for a reason. It's great to spend time around a guy, a mind like his and his brother right here, two of the best tennis minds there are.

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