

Laver Cup

Friday, 24 September 2021

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Felix Auger-Aliassime

John McEnroe

Press Conference

M. BERRETTINI/F. Auger-Aliassime

6-7, 7-5, 10-8

Team Europe - 2

Team World - 0

THE MODERATOR: A very tough match. Can you just talk us through your first-ever Laver Cup experience.

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Yeah, it was a good battle. Yeah, first off, I mean, the atmosphere was great. The crowd was really behind me, behind Team World. It was a good first experience.

Of course, you know, disappointing ending. I really thought I had my chances there. I mean, it was so close. Of course it's disappointing to lose.

At the same time I think I have showed and reflected how much this team wants to win. It's only a start of the weekend. We've got a lot of matches ahead. I'm sure we're going to give it everything to win.

THE MODERATOR: John, a very tight opening session. What does your team need to do tonight to turn it around?

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: Yeah, listen, we've got to keep battling. That's step No. 1. We've got energy. I think we've got a great team spirit. But you've got to step up when push comes to shove.

I give them credit. I've got to say the match that Felix just played with Matteo is one of -- I have been part of Laver Cup, this is my fourth time doing it, one of the best matches, bar none, that I have ever seen played. Absolutely just enthralling.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Tough loss, I know, but I wonder if you could talk about what makes Matteo so tough. You know him, obviously. You guys are friends. You have seen him three times now this year. Talk about what makes him such a battler.



LAVÉR CUP

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Yeah, he's improved a lot. His focus, his mentality. He always had a great serve. I just feel like it's getting also better and better. Even with the slow balls today, he was able to serve well whenever he needed to late in the second set and that super-tiebreak.

Yeah, a lot of credits to him. At the end also he deserved to win. Like I said, he served really well. He did what he had to do, and it was also one of the best matches I have seen him play. We have played twice on grass, different conditions totally, but from the match we played this year in Cincinnati, I feel like he raised his level in this one.

Q. Obviously we know that it was an incredibly close match, but if you had to pinpoint a difference between you, would it come down to Matteo serving?

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: I think he might have served a little bit better than me, for sure. But it's tough to pinpoint. There is so many moments in the match. I mean, both of us had chances to break in the second set. It was a tight one.

And then of course I get those chances late at 5-All. I mean, I can't do anything. He serves two great serves. Of course I wish I would have won that game at 5-6 to put myself in the tiebreak, but, yeah, it's tennis. I can't pinpoint one exact thing that made the difference.

Q. Mac, what were you telling Felix during the match? As you said, and as we witnessed, it was an outstanding performance from both guys. During the match, what advice were you giving Felix?

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: Well, truthfully he did everything I could have hoped for and asked for. He kept up his intensity, he strategized well. I think he mixed it up. He changed return positions.

Obviously Matteo's forehand is huge, and we figured we could work on his backhand, but I've got to say that's the best I have ever seen him step up and hit some great passing shots.

Felix was doing extremely well at net to handle some of those, some very tight moments. You know, he did everything I could have hoped for. That's tough. That's all I can say. It was one of those matches where you feel like there shouldn't be a loser, but unfortunately there is.

We've got an uphill battle. We knew that coming in. Felix, you know, he's just set a great example in the



... when all is said, we're done.®

locker room. Just the effort and the intensity that he played with, it's unbelievable that they played two sets and a tiebreak and it was close to three hours. I mean, that just shows you, when you asked Felix, you know, if he had to pinpoint something, it would be tough to pinpoint.

I think Felix will learn though from the -- if I was going to pinpoint something, it would have been the 5-3 game in the first set, because I just think once he got back into it, it became more of that sort of see-saw, back-and-forth battle as opposed to where he'd be feeling more pressure.

I know Felix is a student of the game, even though he's 21, and I think he knew that even when it happened, and he also tried to get by it when he had that chance at 5-All and 6-5, lost his serve. It was like, Look, you've just got to win the tiebreaker. I get it. He obviously had a bunch of chances there.

But as well as he was playing in the beginning, that 5-3 game, you know, that sort of leveled things off and made it more of a battle maybe than it could have been.

No one ever knows. If he had won the set 6-3, maybe it would have been 7-6 in a tiebreak, but I think that sort of energized Berrettini.

Q. As evidenced by that answer, John has been really behind you, and throughout the match he was really rooting you on. What has been your experience working with him, and what was it like to have him on the bench today?

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: It's good to have John by my side, by the side of the whole team. With so much knowledge about the game, I think the answer he just gave of what he said is exactly what happened.

It's really, I would say, meaningful or precious for me to get, you know, those comments. My mindset coming here is of course wanting to win but also try to learn, try to become a better player. You know, later in the weekend I can maybe play better, get a win, and then next year comes around and I'm more solid and a better player.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports