

Laver Cup

Sunday, 26 September 2021

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

John McEnroe

John Isner

Jack Sock

Nick Kyrgios

Denis Shapovalov

Reilly Opelka

Press Conference

Team Europe - 14

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TEAM WORLD

THE MODERATOR: Not the result you were after this week. Can you just give us your thoughts on this year's Laver Cup overall.

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: We battled our best. These guys are a great team, no question, incredible team. They had good team spirit, as well. We did, as well.

Obviously if you get a couple different results, could have put more pressure on them, but we just came up short in I think four tiebreakers. You win half those, totally different story. Other matches we had a chance to get in.

We gave it our best, but they were too good.

THE MODERATOR: To the whole team, I know it's been a tough week on the court, but starting with Nick and making our way down the line, if each of you could give us a highlight of the week, whether on or off the court.

NICK KYRGIOS: Yeah, obviously not the result we wanted, but I thought we all had fun. For the new guys, Reilly and Felix, I think they had great debuts, put in great performances. As John said, couple points here or there could have changed the swing of things early on. That's the way it goes, and the memories I will take away is another great week. I had a lot of fun.

I'm sure I won't be here again, so, you know, I took everything in this week. I will be watching from my couch next Laver Cup, cheering on, cheering for Team World.



LAVEL CUP

THE MODERATOR: John?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, it was a fun week. You know, we definitely expected this match to be closer, but doesn't mean we didn't come away with some great memories. I think for me watching on Friday, watching these guys battle in singles was super cool. Diego's match in particular, that night session against Andrey was awesome to watch, incredible atmosphere, incredible tennis being displayed out there.

I think Denis and I had a good moment on Friday, to be able to play well and get us on the board. Really, we did believe that we could win after that Friday.

But they are just -- their team is very good. They are absolutely stacked, and we were up against it, and just definitely came up pretty far short this week.

REILLY OPELKA: Like John said, the result doesn't change some of the memories we will take away. Watching John, a guy I always looked up to as a kid, just compete the way he does, in that doubles match he really turned things around. We went to bed at least with a win not thinking we were totally out of it on the first day. Battled unbelievable against Zverev.

Spending time with Johnny Mac is always special, an absolute legend of the game, one of the coolest guys this sport has ever seen.

Another highlight was definitely seeing Roger for the first time. When they turned the camera to him, the whole place just went nuts. Crazy the power one guy in the room can have and just change the mood of everyone in there. Only a couple of guys in the world who can do that, and Roger is one of them.

But a fun week, and thanks to Johnny Mac, and all these guys are my great friends for experiencing it with me.

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: Yeah, basically exactly what they said. I mean, it's just great memories with the team. I think the chemistry was awesome. We definitely had a lot of good times on the bench. Just got along really great.

Just unfortunate with the tennis. I think a lot of matches were really, really close. We get a couple of those, get a little bit of confidence, completely different story.

Yeah, they pulled away pretty early, and it was just difficult for us to try to come back.

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JACK SOCK: Yeah, I have been screaming through a mask my whole weekend so my voice is a little hoarse. Yeah, I think some highlights for all the matches I played were a blast.

In all seriousness, I'm such a team guy, I love being on the bench, I love supporting these guys. There is really nothing better. I think a lot of us have been on a team at one point in our lives, so any time you're out there cheering on your buddies that you see every week and get to do it in this atmosphere in front of a home crowd was incredible.

Yeah, I gave all I could on the bench to try to help these guys. I thought we played some great tennis. I felt like just in the big times it didn't go our way again, unfortunately, but just super happy to be here, super lucky to be included in it. Yeah, hopefully we can all get together and do it again another year.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: Well, I think the organization has been great. They treat us first class, give us everything we need. I think they made this a special event. Obviously, to me, Roger's involvement is important I believe moving forward.

I believe it should be -- this is my personal opinion, but I don't think there should be any tournaments going on if they want to try to get to the level of a Ryder Cup, say. It's got to stand on its own. It's not going to be like, Well, other players need to be able to play and support, you know, get their points at the 250 in Kazakhstan or wherever they are right now. I just don't agree with that.

I think it's a mistake by the ATP. So we'll see what happens. You've got the cloud of Rod Laver who is our Babe Ruth. You've got Roger Federer who is an absolute legend in our game, obviously. I don't need to tell you that.

Yet it's difficult to sort of get sort of the respect that I think this deserves. It tears me up.

As far as the first part of your question, it's really, it's tough, but these guys have given it their all. I just hope I can make a slight bit of positive difference each time. That's what I try to do. 0 for 4, I don't know, I might be on the chopping block. I might be watching Laver Cup, like Nick said he's watching it.

So it would be nice to be part of a team that won, to at least somehow figure out a way. I think we are trending in the right -- not this particular score, but I think that there is guys coming up too, and I think there is going to be an opportunity. Obviously, you know, look at the

rankings. These guys are awesome.

You know, Medvedev comes off, he just won the US Open, he stepped it up big time here. You could go down the list, every single one of them. I mean, Ruud, that's the best match I have ever seen him play, I've got to say. Without question, "the" best. Maybe I missed a couple on clay or something.

The other part is that, to me, it would have been nice, because you feel like you have some sort of say, Well, you're playing at home, you have an event. Well, this court wasn't to our advantage. I would have never, ever, ever played this. Not that these guys didn't battle and we could have turned it around, but if you're going to have a home-court advantage, I would hope to take advantage of that.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: Well, that's absolutely true, but I do think that this type of format favors, you know, the underdogs. You know, things can happen in a hurry. It's two sets and a tiebreaker. Four matches, there was five matches played out of how many, nine, that went to the tiebreak.

Even the ones that we didn't go there, there was opportunities in a few of them. If you had told me, for example, that Reilly was in a tiebreaker, had to win two tiebreakers against Ruud, I would have said we had a good shot. We did have a good shot at that. Ruud played great.

If you had told me that Diego would have been up 6-2 and 8-5 in the tiebreaker, I would have taken that in a heartbeat. We had opportunities in both the doubles we lost.

As John played his heart out, I've got to say John has been -- Nick, I know, loves the event. John has been like a spiritual leader. I want to thank him for his leadership and his effort, because he brings a real team spirit and an energy that I know all the other players respect. I personally, from someone who used to play way back when with energy really appreciate that. So thank you, John.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: Well, I think that it's a job for the people that are involved in the sport to get the fans of the sport and maybe just sports fans to get to know these players better, you know, have a rooting interest. That's why these types of events are successful. You people can come in and root for a team.

As an individual, anybody could be playing for the Boston Red Sox and the Boston fans are going to root for them.

It's not the case when you're individuals traveling the globe.

You have these legends that have been playing, obviously in particular, the three guys, but Roger and Rafa set that standard, and it's a tall order to, you know, fill that vacuum. There is no question.

But it's up to the players, a union, you go down the list, you've got to make and understand it. Listen, in five years you're going to have, maybe you're going to have all four guys staying back in doubles. It's like a different thing. I don't know what the hell is going on.

It's different, so we have to sort of embrace it and sort of, it's a totally different thing happening now. There's got to be a way to help people understand what's going on and appreciate it for what it is.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

DENIS SHAPOVALOV: I mean, it's tough to kind of give advice for Laver Cup. I think it's a pretty far place to go. I think you've got to be one of the top players already in the world.

But in terms of Jerry, he's a great guy. I have gotten to know him the last couple of years, training with him, and I have always said that I really like his attitude on the court. He just loves the game, so it's, I mean, we are really good friends with him, I think. I just love to practice with him, because I feel like he always gives it his all. Family, everyone around him is super, super nice.

He's definitely going to be a tough player in the next couple of years, but in terms of, I mean, Laver Cup experience, it's tough to say something, because I feel if you're making Laver Cup, you already have so much experience playing big matches, so it's not like you're a newcomer.

Look at Reilly, first time playing, or Felix, I mean, the guy made semifinals of a slam, Reilly made finals of a Masters, there is no issues of experience or being young or anything like that.

Q. I don't know whether I saw Vice-Captain Patrick, but the question would be for him and also for John Isner. What do you think can be done in terms of Europe's domination not only in Laver Cup but in slams and the rankings?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, P-Mac is not here.

I think John McEnroe touched on this, I can't remember when, was it yesterday or whenever, I think in America in particular, tennis isn't the No. 1 sport that our maybe male athletes go towards. John spoke about maybe making, trying to make this sport have a deal so it's

maybe not as elite as it seems to some people.

There is no shortage of incredible athletes on this side of the world, so to try to just make it a little bit more accessible, it's certainly cyclical. We have seen America be the dominant force in tennis before Johnny Mac's days, to his days, with everyone he competed against, to the players in the '90s and the early 2000s, but that's definitely, definitely changed.

Hopefully that cycle can turn again, and I think a country like, I speak to American, a country like the United States, can have four or five players in the top 10 like we have always had in the past, but is certainly not the case now.

Look, we're going to keep, Team World is going to keep coming out here and battling the underdog role, actually something that is pretty special, and we have made this event close a bunch of times. I think I speak for everyone up here, whether I play again or not, who knows, but for the future newcomers, there is no one any of us would rather play for than Captain McEnroe. As Reilly said, one of the biggest legends our sport has ever seen, one of the biggest personalities in a very, very good way our sport has ever seen, so this event has it all.

I do think the World will get one of these eventually, and I also think John made some good points about trying to showcase this maybe just a little bit more.

An aside, it also seems like there are some members of the tennis media that want to delegitimize this event for some reason, and I find that very, very odd, don't like talking about it or tweeting about it as they would any other event, but this is not an exhibition. We care deeply about this event. It sucks that we have lost every year, but this event is super special.

Q. I would like to ask a question to John McEnroe. Mr. McEnroe, Alexander Zverev now has won this tournament four times. He's the only European who has played it four times, and like in 2018 and 2019 he has won the decisive match. How many headaches has this guy given you and your team since 2017?

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: Too many. Yeah, he's not the only one. It just so happens that he's been on the other end in this situation. But there has been a lot of other guys that have contributed to success besides him. We don't need to mention the names, but the legends that we have been talking about.

It brings to mind a comment -- John was just saying, and my late-great -- I'm starting to feel that way, but hopefully it will be the last time, "No one beats Vitas Gerulaitis 17 times in a row." I feel like it will be like, "No one wins the Laver Cup, beats us, John McEnroe, five times in a row

in Laver Cup. If I get that chance..."

You gotta keep going, because that was, to me, the greatest line ever said in our sport. It's got to be an inspiration to us. God bless us him up there if he's looking out from up above.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

NICK KYRGIOS: Yeah, I don't really want to talk about any of that stuff. Let's just keep it about the Laver Cup. Next question?

Q. My last question was to Nick. What does it mean to you to play this Laver Cup so many times and have a fellow Australian, Rod Laver, seeing the matches and is still here seeing you play?

NICK KYRGIOS: Yeah, as we have said, and I will say it again, it's a special event. You know, Rod is, you know, an icon of the sport.

To have Roger sitting on the side watching me being alongside these guys, it's special. It's unfortunate I haven't been a part of the winning team yet. I think that something will change in the years to come. World will get over the line I think at least once or twice.

But it's been fun. I saw my best memories have been on the Laver Cup court. Really disappointed I wasn't able to get the win yesterday with John. That was the first doubles match I have lost here as well.

I have had some great memories with Jack I will never forget. We lit up a lot of the stadiums around the world. I've won a singles match in Laver Cup. I had a lot of fun. I got to know Johnny Mac, P-Mac better, got to know some of these guys better as well.

It's been a good run for me. I know there is some young, talented guys that are just better. You know, they are more versatile, more athletic. I have had a good run. I feel like I have done the World proud. I competed every year in Laver Cup really well. I played some great matches, had some chances against Roger, had match points.

I feel like I have done my job. You've got Shapo, Felix, Reilly, these guys are going to be on the team for many, many years to come. I'm excited for them.

I hold my head up high for what I have done for this team. I think I have given everything.

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