

Laver Cup

Friday, 23 September 2022

London, England, UK

Vice Captain Thomas Enqvist

Casper Ruud

Press Conference



LAYER CUP

C. RUUD/J. Sock

6-4, 5-7, 10-7

Team Europe - 1

Team World - 0

THE MODERATOR: We have Casper Ruud and Thomas Enqvist with us. If we can just keep it to one question each for now. Questions.

Q. I was wondering, how does it feel to be backed up by people like Rafa and Roger? They were all your coach today? How do you manage to handle that?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, it feels great. Obviously I was focused about the match and trying to win it, but it's fun, you turn around and have Rafa on one side and Roger on the other side trying to help you.

I didn't feel, even though I lost the second set, I didn't feel like I needed like an unbelievable amount of help, but they came with some good tips. I never played a deciding set in Laver Cup before, so when we got to the deciding one, they told me, you know, Just stick to the right things, play one point by one point. Super-tiebreak is only three points more than a normal tiebreak but it seems much longer.

I think that was good advice. Yeah, it feels a bit surreal to have them on both sides.

Q. You are in great form at the moment, but in that second set you were making errors that you just weren't making at the US Open. Is that just because it happens, or was it pressure of the occasion? Was it something he was doing or what?

VICE CAPTAIN THOMAS ENQVIST: How dare you miss a shot (smiling).

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, no, I think some weeks some places you feel the conditions a little better than others. You feel a little bit more comfortable. I have felt better than I have done so far on the court.

In the really important moments I was able to win most of the points today. Yeah, that second set I played an awful game at 5-All which was not good, made two double faults, went too risky with my second serve. I couldn't sort of get ahold of Jack's game and especially his serve.

Yeah, I had a little bit of a chance at 4-3, I believe, in the second with Love-30, and then I did maybe the only mistake, the forehand inside in, I remember that was one I should have made.

I mean, yeah, things go a little bit up and down. We are humans, as well, so we don't make every shot when it really matters. But if I make 80 or 90% of the right choices or right shots at the right time, I will be happy, but you have to also accept that sometimes not everything can go your way.

Q. Rafa has talked about the sort of nerves associated with having to play with Roger tonight and try and get the win. I guess there is some of that feeling through the whole of the European team, that you want it to end up being a win almost to celebrate his last event. Is that how it feels?

CASPER RUUD: For sure. I mean, when the news came that this was going to be his last tournament or last event for Roger, I immediately thought, you know, of course how sad it was, but also that I'm going to give it all to try to help him, in a way, and help the team for him to finish with a win.

It's a special event. Europe, we are up 4-0 when it comes to head to head, so we want to win and make it five in a row. It's tough. Team World have a good team, but yeah, it's a little bit extra special.

I remember after I won opening game, I went to take some drink, and I was uncertain to who should I look at at the bench, because, like, should I look at Roger, Rafa, Andy or Novak, like who of the big ones should I look at and sort of get confirmation, like, Okay, let's go.

It was a little bit tough and nerve-racking to be out there, but I think we all going to give it all for the team, but also extra special for Roger, and we all want him to finish his career in the best possible way with a win.

Q. How much can you learn from the likes of Roger, Rafa, Novak, Andy, on a week like this when you get to see them up close? And have you dropped in the fact that you're the highest-ranked player here?

CASPER RUUD: I have not told them (smiling).



... when all is said, we're done.®

I don't know. They are obviously older than myself, and they are at the point of their career where, you know, Andy's closer to it than the beginning, so it's inevitable that they will have to all retire at some point.

Yeah, it's impressive to see Novak, Rafa, Andy, of course also Roger, but now that he's retiring, I can, you know, say more about the other three, that they are still hungry and they have won everything there is to win, but they still want to go for more.

Yeah, every practice is still important for them. They don't take anything for granted. It's impressive to see, like I said, because they have experienced it all, they have won it all and everything there is to win, but they are still hungry for more.

That's something I will try to think about when I'm getting older. If I'm getting, you know, more and more tired towards the end of my career, I will think, you know, Roger played until he was 41 and enjoyed it, and Rafa, Novak, they all were winning slams at 36, 37. So it shows just how incredible they are.

Q. I remember writing about you in 2018 when Norway played Ireland and you won three points and you were ranked in the 200s. Could you have imagined then that you'd get into the top 50 let alone be No. 2 in the world?

CASPER RUUD: No (smiling). I don't think I expected it or at least not only four years later.

I remember when I started like middle school or what you call it, between elementary and high school, we have three years in Norway. I went to this athletic school, and first week was a test to present something about yourself and your goals for your career, and I wrote down a goal that what I felt was reasonable was to be top 50 by 2025.

It's been going much faster. I have experienced and did much better than I thought was reasonable to think, but I take it. I mean, at the same time you see players like Sascha, Daniil, and Stefanos who were better before me showing it was possible, so I thought, you know, I also want to join that group and be competitive with them and show that it's possible to do well.

Now we have the No. 1 who is only 19. It shows that you can break through younger than maybe you think sometimes yourself.

Yeah, if you had given me the contract to be No. 2 and play Laver Cup with this team and two finals of Grand Slams this year back in 2018, I would sign it, for sure.

Q. Casper, I think you touched on court about the locker room aspects, and apparently Andy Murray

has said that Roger is the noisiest of all in the locker room. What are your secrets in the locker room as far as the messiest player or the most annoying player or frustrating or whatever?

CASPER RUUD: Ah, good one. But, yeah, it's true that Roger is the loudest and the funniest of all. He sort of has all these nicknames on all the players. He calls Bjorn The King, which I think he deserves. So every time he sees Bjorn he calls him The King in Swedish because he's Swedish. That's always fun to hear. He has many jokes.

But I don't know. Rafa is pretty messy, honestly. Shoes and clothes are hanging everywhere. But on court he's not messy, so he saves all the energy for the court, I guess (smiling). Honestly is a bit messy with his shoes, particularly.

Q. I mean, first I'd like to ask if you could tell us a few more nicknames.

CASPER RUUD: Well, I don't remember them all, but every morning like when we see each other, Roger is very excited to see all the players. He talks a little bit Swedish with me, as well, because he had a lot of Swedish coaches so he knows some words and some sentences, and I was impressed on how much he knows.

I don't think he has a nickname for me, but, you know, Bjorn is The King. Rafa is Rafa, obviously. Yeah, he just likes to joke around. It's fun. He always brings a good energy, good vibe.

It's been very fun to get to know him a little better and see what type of person he is off the court, because it's not easy, as a young player, to be too much around these big four legends. Especially in the last years they have been a little bit on and off the tour, so it's fun for me to get to know him a little bit better.

Q. What I actually wanted to ask before was you were talking about some of the things you have observed or maybe learned being around some of these greats in the game. Wondering if you could discuss how you think what Federer, Djokovic, and Nadal have done with their success in Grand Slam tournaments, how maybe that's changed the paradigm or the way people see Grand Slam success? Nobody had won more than 12 until Sampras got to 14, and now, 20 years later, three guys destroyed that number. How do you think that's changed the way players, fans see those tournaments and those numbers?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, they brought it to a whole different level and showed that anything is possible. You could just imagine or think if one of the three was not there, how many the two other ones would have.

They would probably be close to 30, because those three who have dominated the most. They have, what is it, 63 slams among them? Andy has three, and then Bjorn has 11, is it? So it's, like, yeah, 77 Grand Slams in the locker room. It's pretty crazy when you think about it.

Yeah, I think they have taken tennis to a whole different level, and they have been able to keep it for 17, 18, or almost 20 years, which has been incredible. It gives young players like myself and the younger generation inspiration to see how well it's possible to play.

The record is currently at 22, which is when Sampras set it for 14, you know, people probably thought it's not going to be broken in good time. Then these guys come and they break it, all three of them.

Let's see how long it stands, but you will need maybe only one or two guys who will dominate like crazy for many years to beat it. Yeah, it's just incredible to think that three players have over 60 slams together. I don't think that record will be broken ever, but, yeah, let's see in the future. Anything can happen, of course, but it's an incredible record.

Q. What do you think he should do? Should he be at tournaments or just fade into the background for Roger? What would you like him to do? Would you still like him to be a visible presence?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, for sure. He loves tennis. He talks about tennis a lot. He remembers a lot of matches he played, old stories. Obviously that's what drives him and drives all players.

But I hope he's involved somehow. I think it's only suiting if many stadiums or events or whatever gets named after him, and I think those big three will have many things in tennis named after them in the future and win a lot of awards and prizes.

I hope he will be around and come to some tournaments. Obviously he has family, has four kids and everything that he needs to take care of first, but I'm sure he will miss it a little bit and come to tournaments once in a while. He's involved with Laver Cup, so it's a good chance he will show up here, and I guess Basel is where he grew up. Hopefully he can be around that tournament.

I don't know. That's up to him to decide. I think all players will miss him. We have missed him for some years already when he's not on tour. It's a great vibe when he's back, and he brings a lot of joy, energy, and inspiration around him.

Q. A quick question for Thomas. I was wondering what it's like for you spending time with Bjorn this

week, because I imagine he will be such a superstar in Sweden and around the world?

VICE CAPTAIN THOMAS ENQVIST: Yeah, it's a great honor for me to be here around and help Bjorn. He was my big idol when I grew up and the reason why I started to play tennis. Yeah, being a young boy in Sweden, a whole generation looked up to Bjorn. It's obviously very special.

Q. Is he as cool as he looks?

VICE CAPTAIN THOMAS ENQVIST: He's cooler (smiling). Even cooler.

CASPER RUUD: He's The King. When you get named The King by Roger, you do something right. (Laughter.)

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