

# Laver Cup

Saturday, 24 September 2022

London, England, UK

**Vice Captain Patrick McEnroe**

**Felix Auger-Aliassime**

Press Conference

M. BERRETTINI/F. Auger-Aliassime

7-6, 4-6, 10-7

Team Europe - 4

Team World - 2

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the press conference of Felix Auger-Aliassime and Patrick McEnroe.

Questions.

**Q. To both Felix and Patrick, Patrick, you were saying the other day, yeah, things are close, but you've got to get yourself into that position at least to try and turn things around. Felix, to you, such a close match. Your thoughts on today? Patrick, address the closeness issue, please.**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Well, yeah, it was a good match overall. I think I was serving great in the first set. Didn't really give him any opportunities to get a look or to break me.

I had myself one or two looks and then just a bit tentative in the tiebreak in a few moments, hesitating. I felt like it was on both sides. It was a bit tight. We knew how much that first set meant, considering it's a third-set breaker, so it was a bit of tension there.

But then second set I played great. Was dominating really the whole second set. Yeah, a few mistakes that I can't make in order to win in the third set, and he played well, served amazing.

Yeah, overall a good level. Of course disappointing to not get the win for Team World and to get my first win in Laver Cup.

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK McENROE: Yeah, I agree it was a great match from both guys. As we have seen, it often comes down to a couple of points.

But we were happy to be even coming into Saturday. Obviously we'd like to get back even with this match going on right now. That's our goal really for the rest of



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the day and into the night is if we can be level, or obviously up would even be better. But we are happy with how things finished on Day 1, and hopefully we will be in the same position tonight.

**Q. A question for you, Patrick. Could you tell me the difference, obviously he's still a young player, but the difference between last year and this year for Felix?**

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK McENROE: I think Felix is continuing to grow. I mean, he's a great kid, he's a hard worker, he's improving his game all the time.

It's just about now, as he just said, it's playing those important points where you're even more confident in your ability to go for your shots when it matters most.

He's up against a guy who is also at the top of his game and continuing to improve in Berrettini. We have seen how well he's played in big matches in the last two years. I think Felix is continuing to improve every year, and we expect him to be on our team for a long time.

**Q. Felix, talking about the small margins, did you feel going into the tiebreaker or before the tiebreak in the first set, was that perhaps more of an opportunity, did you feel like you had the balance of play a little bit prior to the tiebreak in the first?**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: In the first set?

Well, you know, in general, generally speaking, when you have a player that gets more opportunities to break or that basically wins more points on the return in the set, you know, I think if you look at matches and percentage, that player usually wins the tiebreak or gets more looks.

But, yeah, he stepped up, and like I said, I would have to watch it again, I don't remember everything, but, yeah, I just felt that there was a bit of tension in that tiebreak from both sides.

You know, he had opportunities on his serve. Couldn't make it. I had a look, I missed a second-serve return. Whenever we felt like we had the chance, we weren't able to seize it on both ends.

It was a bit of a tense tiebreak, but going into it, like you asked, I felt good. Like, I felt good about my chances.

**Q. And I specifically meant prior, like the first 12 games before the tiebreak, did you feel like he was determined the better player, or did you feel like it**

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**was just too close?**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Well, surely I think I won more points than him, so was I the better player? I mean, the better player wins the important points at the end of the day (smiling). But, yeah, I did feel comfortable because I was winning my service games quite easily in terms of the score, and I got a breakpoint. I got, I think, two times at 30-All, things like this.

Yeah, I did feel like I was, for 12 games, a bit better.

**Q. I'd like to ask both of you to respond to this, if you would. This whole event, of course, as we saw last night, has in many ways been a celebration about Roger Federer's career. We also see the other two members of that big three out here, Nadal and Djokovic. Wondering how what those three guys have done changes maybe the paradigm, sets a different bar for the way younger players such as Felix and others coming up consider Grand Slam titles, consider what's possible or impossible, looking at the big picture for their careers, having seen what those guys have done.**

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Well, yeah, as a young player -- well, first, of course it's a celebration of Roger's career. As you could see yesterday night, it was emotional for everybody.

I think for his rivals and friends like Rafa and even Novak, I think they also can relate. You know, they see the end coming. I mean, they are on the last years of their career. I think nobody wants to stop, you know, when you love this game so much and gave it your everything.

So that's the first thing. I think it was happy emotions but very emotional.

And then for myself and, yeah, young players, I think they've put the bar really high, which is good. It makes the sport very competitive. Now the younger players are training hard, always trying to improve, being more and more professional. It does raise the bar of the level and the competitiveness of the sport, which I think pushes the sport forward.

Then the Grand Slams have always been important. Since the years of Rod Laver, we still talk about what do you achieve in Grand Slams today, which proves that the Grand Slams will always stay important in our sport. I think all the players of my generation know that.

For myself, it's about now, I'm 22, but understanding more and more how to prepare for those and how to play my best tennis in those particular tournaments.

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK McENROE: Yeah, I think, you

know, from a couple of different perspectives, it's hugely important what those guys have done, you know, not only in changing the way the game is actually played on the court, like Felix is talking about certain improvements that you saw them bring to the game, and then you see, okay, Rafa did things to improve aspects of his game that he probably didn't think about when he was 19 or 20. Then Novak, his second serve got better and he started to come to net more.

So, you know, they all pushed each other. I think that's pushed the game forward to where the younger players now coming up now realize they have to improve a lot of things if they want to be the best.

Then I also think just from the perspective of great champions and the way they have conducted themselves has been awesome to see that you can play at the highest level, you can have amazing sportsmanship, you know, win, lose in incredibly tough situations. Some of the matches they have won and lost in big tournaments, big finals.

Yeah, they have always seemed to bounce back from them. They always seem to look at the game as being better off because of it, even though they have suffered some really tough defeat.

I think in a lot of levels they have all left the game in great hands. I think to guys like Felix and the younger guys, Carlos and Sinner and Frances and these young players coming up have learned from that on a lot of different levels.

I think as we saw this year at the US Open, it was a tremendous event, you know, outside of the top names that we're used to seeing. And even here, obviously this is, as you said, it's a celebration of Roger and what he's done, but it's also a chance for these young players to shine and show what they can do.

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