

Laver Cup

Sunday, 24 September 2023

Vancouver, BC, Canada

Team World

Captain John McEnroe

Vice Captain Patrick McEnroe

Taylor Fritz

Frances Tiafoe

Tommy Paul

Felix Auger-Aliassime

Ben Shelton

Francisco Cerundolo

Christopher Eubanks

Milos Raonic

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming, guys.

John, maybe we will start with you. Congratulations. A tremendous week. Took the lead on Friday and never looked back. Just your thoughts on your team and what you accomplished.

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: Well, on behalf of Team World, I am proud of these guys. We brought together a great group of some youth and experience, guys that have been here before. Everybody played well.

It was an awesome week. We kicked some ass, baby. That's what we did.

So we're looking, already thinking about next year, because, you know, winning is a whole lot better than losing. We struggled the first couple years, and now we have tasted winning and it feels good.

Thank you, boys.

(Applause.)

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: A special thanks to, where is he, my brother over there, my right-hand man over there, who has taken care of me for years. Thank you, buddy. I love you.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.



LAVEL CUP.

Q. I'm going to go to the rookie over here, now that it's official. Can you just, A, talk a little bit about your emotions, given all that you accomplished here as a young man. Also what's Johnny Mac like as a coach behind the scenes.

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, it's been crazy so far this week. Really enjoyed playing for Team World. Playing for Johnny Mac, it's been amazing.

I really enjoyed this weekend and being able to be chosen for this team. It's been a dream. To be able to put points on the board for Team World, it's something that I couldn't have imagined. I really appreciate both the captains for putting their trust in me, and being able to get it done at the end of the week is a great feeling.

Q. What about Mac behind the scenes?

BEN SHELTON: I think Mac behind the scenes will let you know what he was like behind the scenes. (Laughter.)

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: You know, these guys are, all these guys have guys around them. So I just tried to sort of figure out what hopefully makes them tick in a very short period of time. If I could add that tiny little bit, hopefully I bring some energy and passion.

I think the guys here know I love the event and I believe in this event. I hope it succeeds big time in the future.

That's what it's all about, but, you know, I have been around for a while. To me, this is something that I wasn't expecting, so we've got to nurture this. Hopefully when I'm gone...

FRANCES TIAFOE: You ain't going nowhere, man.

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: ...hopefully this will be something that's around for a long time.

Q. One for Felix. I know you talked a lot earlier in the week about expectation, everything you have endured this season with your play and with your injury. What does this experience mean to you, not just in your home country but your level of play was stepped up. What's your level of satisfaction from this event?

FELIX AUGER-ALIASIME: I feel good. Every time I play for a team, I feel really good and I feel like I played good levels. Of course I had a great time.

... when all is said, we're done.®



You know the tour can get, playing singles all the time, can get a bit lonely, I guess at times, and to have teammates to win as a team, for me it's really special. I'm having a great time again this year.

Like Mac said, to win is the best feeling (smiling). It's nice to come back a year later after what we had done in London to come back and win here in Vancouver. Look, that's what we wanted a week ago when we arrived. We did it. We backed it up and stepped up to the challenge and made it happen. It was a great time for me.

Q. Fran, you're also a rookie, if you can talk about the experience and what sort of camaraderie you had with the boys and what you're looking forward to take into the rest of the year.

FRANCISCO CERUNDOLO: I'm super happy. I want to thank John, Patrick, all the guys, because I'm the only one away from U.S. and Canada. They made me feel like one of them since the first day.

Really happy to be here, to be part of the team, and to put points on the board. Really good experience for me, and I super enjoyed it. I hope the guys like me and like Argentina a little bit.

FRANCES TIAFOE: Solid dude, Fran.

(Applause.)

Q. Frances?

FRANCES TIAFOE: Oh, God.

Q. You have been three times at the Laver Cup. 2019 you said they treat you like kings. Can you talk a bit about that, what the experience is like and what it means to be treated like kings and what it's been like here in Vancouver?

FRANCES TIAFOE: It's a special event, special event. It's unbelievable what they were able to come up with to put this event on. Obviously, you know, showing so much love to Rod, Federer who is such a legend, what's behind them, teammates, to come up with this event, have guys come together. There is no real team event outside of Davis Cup, which is a different kind of event now, but nonetheless, I mean, this is unbelievable.

To be a part of to go back to back, to be with a legend like John, John and Bjorn, obviously their rivalry and friendship now, it's incredible. You know, happy to just be a small part of this and to be able to win some matches.

Yeah, you know, I'm pretty loaded right now so it's pretty tough. Yeah. (Laughter.) I lost what I was saying. I'm

sorry, man. I'm sorry.

Q. Thanks for letting us join your happy hour.

FRANCES TIAFOE: I like that.

Q. Since everyone is having a great time, can anyone share a story from behind the scenes this week that just sums up the great sense of team spirit that you have developed among each other this week?

CHRISTOPHER EUBANKS: Any stories? I can't think of anything in particular. I would say a lot of the bonding that happens in the locker room is probably some of the coolest things. After guys kind of have their warmups, come into the locker room, Frances goes DJ mode. Other players make specific requests. Ben and Fritz playing Central Cee before taking the court, and just sharing that moment I think it's kind of like a bonding experience.

The locker rooms are pretty small. It's not the biggest space. You have a lot of guys here all crammed into a small area and all just enjoying each other's company, whether it's just hyping them up and gassing each other up before they go on the court, giving them as much confidence as they need, whether, hey, do you need me to grab your racquet from the stringer, do you need towels, all that little stuff.

When you're in that small, confined space and you have so many different guys and so many different personalities, I think those times will probably be the times I remember the most, just because you're all kind of on top of each other and I think you really get to see each other's personality and really get to enjoy each other.

Q. Taylor, you were part of the winning team last year and again this year. Talk to us a little bit about your feeling on that and also your biggest takeaway on playing with all these guys this week.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, it's amazing to come back winning after last year. Obviously we all got to celebrate last year and it was so much fun. It was one of my, like, top memories since I have played tennis.

We all wanted that again this year, and we got it. Yeah, it's great to go back to back, and now we all want to come back next year and do it all again. This spot is amazing.

It's just different as opposed to when you're on the tour playing by yourself and you win something, it's just not the same as this. When you win something with all these guys and all your close friends, you get to celebrate it. You get to enjoy it a lot more, I guess.

That's the biggest takeaway is these team events, you just got to enjoy it more because you never get situations like this where you can all celebrate as a group and enjoy it together. So it's just, yeah, it's just so much fun.

Q. Congrats. Might be a question for John or anyone can jump in. When you think back to last year's win, I think Felix's face comes to your mind for, like, the way he clinched it and he played amazing. Ben coined the phrase "Laver Cup Felix" last night. What about this year? What iconic moments will you remember? Whose face will come to your mind from this one?

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: This was like a complete group effort. Everyone stepped up. I think we knew coming in we had a great chance, and we had more belief obviously from winning it. But to me, we actually expected to win this one. The other years it was, you know, we weren't quite so sure.

So this is a beautiful feeling. We're going to give everyone the MVP this year.

Q. Who stepped up as leaders on this team? From the sidelines, even seemed like Chris was leading. He was a coach out there, talking a lot to everyone, helping everyone.

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: As I said, even every player that we had, including our alternates, you know, who stepped up and won that match at the end, it turned out it was a great mix. It really was.

I think that what Taylor said is so apropos. A team event like this I think is not only good for the sport, it's good for the players in a way that they are able to sort of get together and rally around. Because a lot of tournaments it's like an unwritten rule, you can't root for anyone, you've just got to worry about yourself.

So these team events take even more importance in my mind, to be able to do this and do it successfully, and that's, you know, that's what we proved this year.

Q. John, could you expand a little bit more on Milos? He's here as an alternate, but I'm sure guys sitting here as well can speak to him, not just the leadership, but a guy who has kind of been there and done it and of course he went out and played today. How about his contribution to the team? I think it's probably more than people realize.

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: I think obviously Milos is someone that changed, to me, the way Canadians view the sport of tennis. He did things that had never been done before.

So that allowed the Federation, I think, to put more into players like Andreescu and Felix and Shapovalov and others and have lifted it up.

He's been huge. Then he came on here, you know, I obviously was working with Milos years ago, so it's like sort of extra special for me to have him out here. He knows everything about everything. (Laughter.)

Don't forget that. That's important for us. It was like a learning week for us. Milos, thank you, once again.

Q. Congratulations, gentlemen. Well done. Bravo. This question is for you, John, and/or Chris and the veterans. I would be silly not to ask you, Frances. It has to do with the location. It's the first time the Cup is in Canada. I'd love you guys to talk a little bit about how this city stacks up in terms of services, quality, the vibe, the crowds, the turnout? What can you tell us about what made Vancouver distinct this time?

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: I would like to allow the veterans of our team, starting with Tommy over there, to talk about what it meant.

To me, just very briefly and let it go, you know, the Canadians, I feel like they are our cousins. So, you know, as an American, it feels like, Okay, we're here in Vancouver. This is good.

I wasn't exactly sure what to expect, you know, coming in as far as how much support we got. So I was really pleasantly surprised that we got a lot of support and that was great.

As far as the rest of that answer, I'm going to leave it to the vets, Taylor, start with Tommy, and then Taylor can throw in his two cents' as well as Frances.

TOMMY PAUL: I don't know why he came to me, but yeah, like he said, I wasn't really sure what to expect with the Canadian crowd, but, I mean, they definitely put on for us.

I wasn't sure how it was going to go when we were up in score. You know, a lot of crowds like to see it get down to the wire and get close, but I kind of felt like the crowd was on our side the whole time.

I mean, it was a lot of fun for our team. Our team played unreal. I think that we kind of were super confident going into the event, and, I mean, I was kind of part of the team last year, and going in this year, we were much more confident. The crowd helped us a ton. It was a lot of fun for all of us to play from the start of the event all the way to the end.

FELIX AUGER-ALIASSIME: Yeah, we've talked a lot this

week about being in Vancouver, personally for me, playing in Canada, we don't get many weeks as much as our American friends here playing in their own country, so usually it's once a year for me. So it's nice to play again in Canada.

It's nice to see, you know, the Laver Cup going to different cities, and hopefully in the future we can go around and the competition can keep on growing and we can play in front of many different fans and see how it goes.

But for this year, it was a great one. I was happy I was a part of it of course. Going to keep great memories for my time this week.

Q. John, last year you led the team to victory against a team that had Federer, Nadal, Djokovic, Murray and company. This year you led the team to victory as the favorites. Did one year outdo the other, or are they the same or one more special?

CAPTAIN JOHN McENROE: Well, it never gets old winning, obviously. But that was, you know, incredible hurdle we got over last year. Then with Roger retiring, I mean, that took on added magnitude, just the whole weekend. It was that much more intense. Rafa there, Novak, Andy, all four of those guys being there was unbelievable. We got over the hurdle.

It's different. We did have much higher expectations coming in. But in this case, like I think the players themselves helped me win. You know, I had very little to do with it. But it was awesome to be out there, and we all brought some intensity, some fun, and some energy to it.

It just worked out perfect. We got some breaks. You know, a lot of things went our way, which is awesome. That's why we were able to win as convincingly as we did.

Q. Taylor, talk a little bit about the pressure of playing in this environment. There is sort of a sense that there is a lot of support from the teammates, it's fun, but talk about how stressful it actually is out there.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Well, it's different kind of coming in feeling like we are almost the favorites coming in as opposed to previous years we are coming up against all the best players in the world, like the lineup that Team Europe had last year, it's a lot different.

There is more pressure on you, especially when you feel like you're the favorites. And with the format, as well, you know, we did amazing on Day 1 and Day 2. It's quickly how bad things can go for you on the format on Day 3 if you just lose a couple of matches.

But just the level from everyone in this team all week was amazing. Everyone showed up and played about as good as they could possibly play. That's why we, I guess, got it done with the scoreline that we did.

Yeah, I mean, winning last year was amazing, but there is something to be said about, I guess, the way we did it this year with the expectations on us and we were still able to perform the way we did under, you know, what I'd say is more pressure than last year.

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