

Laver Cup

Friday, 20 September 2024

Berlin, Brandenburg, Germany

Team Europe

Stefanos Tsitsipas

Captain Bjorn Borg

Press Conference

S. TSITSIPAS/T. Kokkinakis

6-1, 6-4

Team Europe - 1

Team World - 1

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, and congratulations on winning the second match of the Laver Cup.

Stefanos, how was the game for you? How important was it leveling the competition at 1-1?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Great start to my debut this year in Berlin. I want to honor my captains and the team that I'm surrounded by. I know this is Bjorn's last year as a team captain, and so is for Thomas.

My wish this week is to try and maximize as much as I can from my game. I know it's easy to say that, but I will really have to work hard for every single set that I will be playing this week. I really want to honor my team captains, my teammates that are by my side supporting me, and represent the Continent in the best possible way.

Today's assessment of my game is a positive one, and I'm happy how things went during the entire match. I felt in control. I felt like I was able to play some really good rallies and come up with some big shots during those rallies.

So these type of plays help me mostly, I would say, win psychologically. I was already starting to feel that psychologically I'm getting to a good place, and that was something that pushed me to get the win today.

CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: Yes, let me say to see his tennis, what he performed today was unbelievable. He played so well. I mean, he's been playing many times in Laver Cup, but for me to see him, because he's one of the best players in the world, but it matter to perform at the right time. And he did that today.



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So I'm happy. It's 1-All, it's a big win, important win for us. We see what's going to happen tonight, but for me to have him on the team, it's important, very important.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. It's the third time you have played Thanasi. The previous two were best-of-five. What made the difference today in the way you played against him? Because the other matches were pretty close, and the last time he beat you at the US Open.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I came on the court with a big sense of determination from the very beginning, and I really didn't want to repeat what happened at the US Open.

I was giving away a lot of unforced errors, and I wasn't returning that well there. So it was something that I wanted to resolve and change for today's game, because I didn't want to follow the same path that I did in New York a few weeks ago.

He played well in that match, but I felt like these conditions suit me. It gives me a little bit of time to think and construct my points. So it was definitely something I felt in favor from the beginning. Being pumped up from the beginning, feeling that team energy going into the court, it allows me to thrive in a different way than I usually thrive when I play on my own.

So it does give me that stronger sense of purpose and determination to get out there and rally as long as it takes and maximize in terms of physicality and rallying forever, pretty much. So I'm not just playing for myself. I'm playing for everyone else that is there for the same purpose for this week's Laver Cup.

CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: I have to say, too, to see him play as well as he did today is good for him personally, mentality, everything. Because this is the guy who should be always to win Grand Slam tournaments because the way he plays, but it's matter of how you feel, psychologically, mental, all these things.

But I'm very happy that he played as well as he did today, and you should take that in the future, because you are one of the best players in the world.

Q. Stefanos, if you can take anybody in the world to be your coach, who you choose and why?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Right now? Bjorn (smiling).



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CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: No, but I think we have a good team spirit. For me personally, I'm very old, but to spend time with these guys, and I have been doing that for many years, and I respect and I like the way they are as persons, not only tennis, but personality is very important. That's why for him to be, my loss, yeah, to be this week together with me, it's fantastic.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Thank you, Bjorn.

The aura, it's all about the aura. Why I choose Bjorn, it's not because he's sitting right next to me here. I feel like the aura makes a big difference. Sometimes it's not what they tell you and how they tell you. It's that intimacy that you feel of someone sitting next to you and communicating things to you in a spiritual way.

I feel like that's something that I have enjoyed with Bjorn in the last few years, having played Laver Cup, and that is also why I keep coming back. I know that I have a great team captain by myself to support my tennis. That is also something that brings a lot of relief when I step out on the court.

I know that there is this person by my side that I have massive respect for, but also, I want to make him proud. I really want to make Bjorn proud. I almost feel him as one of my close people.

CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: Grandfather. (Laughter.)

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Mini Bjorn. They keep telling me to be Mini Bjorn.

CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: The important thing is the chemistry, what you have the feeling with the team. I have a great team. Such great players playing.

But he's been around before, but that's important, the chemistry and the feeling. Maybe I don't say too many things, but he understands.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: I understand your language. You can tell me anything.

CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: Exactly.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Yeah, that's what brings comfort.

Q. You said yesterday on Instagram that your strategy was to hit winners, look cool, and remind everybody that Federer might drop by to check on you.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: He did check on us.

Q. So how is it going so far? How is your strategy?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: It's going exactly how I explain it on that caption. I guess we're all looking cool so far.

What was the other one?

Q. Hit winners.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Hit winners, yeah. We did hit plenty of winners today.

Q. Hit winners, look cool, and remind everyone that Federer might drop by.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Yeah, that's a massive advantage that we have. Roger is for sure on our team. He doesn't want to disclose that himself, but we all know that he's there whenever we need him for the big moments, and that is a small advantage that we carry with us (smiling).

They might have Rod, but we have Roger. It's a good rivalry (smiling).

Q. So we see a glut of exhibitions at the moment and team competitions. I'm curious how your opinion around this packed calendar is. And then maybe second question, do you think that we have certain lack of impact for these events because there are too many or so many?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Exhibitions? We don't have that many exhibitions that are part of the ATP calendar. Laver Cup counts as an ATP event this week, and there isn't another competition or exhibition that you can compare it to. I can't think of anything else.

I wouldn't call United Cup an exhibition, because it offers points. So it's a normal tournament, in my opinion.

For me, Laver Cup, it's that honorary tournament that you get to play that you're just proud of being selected to be part of the roster and the team. It stretches way more than just points, because you're chasing points entire year, and this is a week that you're dedicating yourself into playing your best tennis because obviously it's an honor just to be part of the team already, and you just want to maximize as much as you can.

We have an incredible squad of players, great captains that lead us and show us the way. I actually feel bigger excitement for competition like Laver Cup probably than some other tournaments during the year. It brings the best out of me, and I have always felt like I connect with the concept really well, and I try and enjoy and learn from that week as much as possible, because it teaches me so much throughout my career.

Q. A question to both of you if you like, because it's more of a general question. With Sinner and Alcaraz

winning all the slams this year, do you kind of fear a new era of domination maybe in the upcoming years with the Big 3 now going more to the background?

CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: No, I'm just saying with the team I have this year, he's saying like this is a big event for everybody. Look who's playing? I mean, everybody's playing. They want to play.

You know, I'm not going to say the names, but some European wants to play Laver Cup, but I need six players. But they want to play. That's why they support Laver Cup and all those things.

And that's such a great thing. What you said regarding competition, we hate the Rest of the World, come on (smiling). We are like this, believe it or not, but me and John, we are good friends, but when it comes sitting on the bench, looking at these guys, we are very competitive, and the same with these guys too.

We hate to lose to the Rest of the world. Maybe you don't see that, but I think you can see that if you understand that kind of a thing.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: We are trying to make tennis belong to us, to take it, bring it to Europe. We need that trophy (smiling).

CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: Of course. I hope we're gonna win this. It's important for all of us. Not only for me but for the players too. That's why they're here.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: People often tell me that it's an exhibition and you guys don't care and et cetera, but I'm like, trust me, we care a lot. There is a lot at stake, and we really want to get everything for ourselves.

Of course being the player in that competition, it makes me understand every single year the Laver Cup gets held, I think the importance of it grows even more. It becomes more and more of a historical event the more the years pass.

Regarding Carlos and Jannik, it's been great for tennis to see them win slams. First of all, it has been a learning experience for us to see what it requires, to find ourselves in the same position as they are. These two are one of the biggest hitters, one of the most aggressive players that the tour carries right now.

It teaches you also that you really have to go for it, and you can't be too passive to win slams. Any chance that comes your way, you know, aggressive and attacking tennis is the solution and is the answer to those big slams and big wins that you require in order to maximize the most out of your career.

Q. Bjorn, is there any chance that we see you in the

future as a super coach? I think you have really great offers.

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: It's for you.

CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: For me?

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Super Coach Bjorn.

CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: For me personally?

For me, I have a family, I have kids, dogs, pets. I have all these things. I'm very happy with that.

But to spend one week with these guys, I'm very happy. But that's a different thing for me, because I'm old. I see a little bit myself in these guys, because they need some push and they need some advice --

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS: Guidance.

CAPTAIN BJORN BORG: And guidance, exactly, right. But I'm happy, but that's why I will listen to these guys, because they have a lot of stories they tell, and for me, as an old player, hundred years ago, listen to this, it's interesting, it's fun, and sometimes I don't understand the whole thing, but that's why I love to spend time with these guys.

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