

Laver Cup

Sunday, 22 September 2024

Berlin, Brandenburg, Germany

Team Europe

Casper Ruud

Vice Captain Thomas Enqvist

Press Conference

ALCARAZ-RUUD/Shelton-Tiafoe

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THE MODERATOR: Welcome, Casper and Tomas. Thanks for joining us. What a nail-biter and what a way to open up the competition again here with the win on the third day of Laver Cup.

What was your match plan? How well did you and Carlos execute it?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, it was a really fun start to the day. I was kind of happy to get a chance again to revenge or avenge yesterday's loss and was really fun to play with Carlos. Our game plan was to make more returns than yesterday and play a little bit more kind of baseline game.

We are no doubles specialists, so on top of the net we did well, but I don't think we won the match on top of the net like maybe doubles players do. It was more kind of firepower from the baseline. We think we connected well. We moved good kind of with each other. When we crossed, we covered the other guy's side and so on.

We were returning well and playing good behind our serve, and at the net we hit some good volleys, and Carlos hit a few unbelievable ones. Yeah, it was fun, good chemistry.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You were honest on court about how you felt last night. Can you talk about the discussions that led to you and Carlos teaming up? Can you also cover how you chose to play on the sides? Because you played ad court last night and he played deuce court Friday and you switched.

CASPER RUUD: Well, there were some discussions in



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the team yesterday. We had about 30 minutes after we saw their lineup. We were a bit clueless for the doubles matchup particularly.

We asked Carlos if he would be interested in playing doubles, because obviously he has played doubles on the big occasion with Rafa at the Olympics. He doesn't necessarily play too often the doubles, but he's such a great player that you put him any position, he'll give his all. We kind of asked him if you were to play doubles, who would you feel comfortable playing with? For some reason he picked me. I don't know why, but I was happy to play (smiling).

VICE CAPTAIN THOMAS ENQVIST: Now we know why.

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I guess now we know he gets the best out of me somehow.

No, it's an honor to play. I have had the kind of chances, I'm only few years older than him, to witness his rise to the tour. He beat me already when he was 17. He's just continued to improve and improve, and I just, you know, it was really cool to play with him. He's kind of, being so young, it's impressive how he's able to kind of feel as a leader on court, and that fired me up as well.

Q. You didn't play doubles as juniors?

CASPER RUUD: Him and I? No, he's a bit too young for us to play at the same time in the juniors, but it was great. I think we just connected and let loose, and we got a good start, saved a few breakpoints, and then kind of gave it to Team World.

They probably felt a bit surprised that they didn't win this match. I'm pretty sure they felt confident on paper, especially given how the doubles went yesterday. But we had other plans today.

Q. I think before the weekend some people were a bit worried that the Laver Cup might not be the same without any of the Big 3 playing. Now that the event is coming to an end, do you personally feel like that made a difference? And how do you see the future of the event in general?

CASPER RUUD: Well, I think there is a lot of young players on tour these days. Obviously Novak is kind of the one from the previous generation. Then you have a bunch of young guys eager to play. Anyone from kind of Daniil's age down to Carlos' age, it's a big group of guys. It's funny that the youngest of us all has been the one

... when all is said, we're done.®



who has been the most successful. It's just really incredible and impressive.

I think yesterday, when I got to watch Carlos up close in the singles, I was just, you know, tremendously impressed with how good he is from each corner of the court. When he's on, it's a joy to watch, because he brings joy to the court, he smiles, and he also plays unbelievably good tennis.

It's great to have him around, and I think he's great for the sport. He will hopefully, in the future, play many more times. He will always kind of light up the arena when he steps on the court.

Q. For both of you, but for Thomas, how did you make up today's lineup, particularly in the singles order? I think we were a little surprised you didn't put Carlos in the first singles. And how much of an impact or a say in that lineup do you guys have as the players? I heard about the doubles, but who plays when?

VICE CAPTAIN THOMAS ENQVIST: Yeah, it's a good question. It's a very difficult decision, because we have a good problem is that we have so many good players. You try to listen in to the matchup and the history they have with the play before and who they kind of prefer to play. Still, on this level, you say that you might have preference to some. It doesn't mean that for sure you're gonna win.

I will say that it's a team decision, in a way. Throughout the years where I have been involved in this event, they have been extremely both professional, generous to each other, very honest. It's nice to listen to their conversation, and they really care for the team and try to find a solution where everybody backs it up.

Q. Why did you choose to play Carlos last, which meant that he might not play?

VICE CAPTAIN THOMAS ENQVIST: Yeah, I think it's like matchups, for example, and also he played now doubles. You had an option, for example, it looks like Ben wanted to maybe stay on, because that's maybe the way -- Isner always did that, as well, he likes to not have the break and come back, which maybe some other player wants to have some rest to be able to come back and feel strong again.

So it's a lot of extremely complicated equations.
(Laughter.)

CASPER RUUD: My guess is that given, like, kind of Carlos' level yesterday, they didn't maybe want him to have a chance to start off the singles, so they put Ben, because he couldn't play Ben again because they played yesterday. You're not allowed to have the same matchup

again.

I think kind of Team World was if there is one guy on Team Europe we don't want to start off singles and kind of get a win, it would be Carlos maybe.

VICE CAPTAIN THOMAS ENQVIST: You see?

Q. Why did they have to have their lineup in before yours?

CASPER RUUD: Because we get to see their lineup one day and they get to see our lineup one day, Saturday and Sunday. We chose to see theirs on Sunday. So that kind of gives them the opportunity to kind of block off at least Carlos for first singles, but it's not a bad option to have on the deciding match potential to have Carlos. We hope that he's ready and brings the level he did yesterday.

Q. Casper, you seem like a whole different player if we compare to yesterday night. I'm guessing the pairing with Carlos and the chemistry you had had a role in that, but it might not be the only thing. What did you change in your own mindset or how did you get up from yesterday's match and start again anew?

CASPER RUUD: Yeah, I don't know. It's just crazy what seven hours of sleep can do to you. You wake up as a total new person.

No, but in doubles it's so small margins, in a way. Yesterday it's not like I felt like I played horrendous, but just was a little off. Me and Stef had never played with each other. We didn't make enough returns. Then you kind of fall on the back foot right away. We got broken and it's not easy to come back.

These guys are kind of just a powerhouse couple, and they powered through us. Then today we were more ready from the beginning. I was kind of more ready for Ben's serve because he's kind of the only one who serves with that power as a lefty on tour. When you have it in a way fresh in your mind what's going to come to you, it's not easier but you're more prepared for his serve.

Yeah, Carlos and I just kind of clicked better on the returns especially. And as a pairing, I think we had a lot of fun. It's very easy to have fun with Carlos on court because he brings his energy and his smile and some great shots. It was just easy to enjoy the match.

We got a good start. We broke them this time early and went out from there. I think it was just in the end a good doubles match.

Q. Questions to both of you, in a way. I feel like Norwegian tennis is making very good steps and

progression right now. We've also seen it at the US Open with juniors like Nicolai Budkov Kjaer and Emily Sartz-Lunde who had very good results there. Casper, why do you think that is? Question to Thomas, what do you think is the reason for the fact that Norway seems to be the more successful tennis nation right now in Scandinavia after it was the other way around for such a long time?

CASPER RUUD: Well, I would just like to say that Sweden, the history is still heavily in their favor. They had more than 10, I don't know exactly, but multiple Grand Slam champions, multiple top-10 players for many, many years. So it's not even point to compare it.

But right now I guess just a little bit seems like there are stronger hunger in a way in other countries than Sweden right now. I'm not sure why that is. I know that maybe people or kids in Norway or Denmark or Finland think that, you know, if Sweden were able to do it for so many years, why not our country? That's a little bit the mindset. It's a bit coincidental, as well.

But for me, in my case, I hope that kind of I can continue to play well and somewhat be not a role model but maybe give hope to other kids in Norway that if Casper can do it, maybe I also can do it. To be a professional tennis player, we don't have that many of them in Norway in our history. So it's not easy for someone to believe from a young age that it is actually possible.

It's also a question about at a teenage stage in your life, should I choose to go pro, should I choose the more safe route, which is college route, which many of my friends did. But I was always kind of, I knew in my mind right away that professional life was what I wanted and I would give it a shot. I think mostly I was able to kind of dare to say that because of my father, because I looked up to him as a role model.

Sweden had so many players for so many years, so it was probably easier for Swedish kids, like also Thomas has been saying very openly when he looked at Bjorn and maybe also Mats Wilander, seeing that they were able to win Grand Slams, he would probably think as a kid if they can do it, maybe I also can do it. He dared to kind of chase his dream, which is really important for young kids.

Do you want to answer about the Swedish one?

VICE CAPTAIN THOMAS ENQVIST: Yes, we are Scandinavian now in Sweden, so we support Casper, and it's super. We are so proud of him. (Laughter.)

Q. Casper, how do you feel playing doubles in general? Since you say you click so well with Carlos, obviously we saw that, would you like to team up with him again?

CASPER RUUD: I'm available if he wants to, but his schedule, we don't always have the same kind of schedule of tournaments, but I'm gonna be ready.

I think neither of us play a lot of doubles during the year. At least in my case, I can't speak for him, but I prioritize to take sometimes a bit more care of my body on a day off. If I play singles only, it's easier kind of.

I do think the last year I have been playing a bit more doubles and it's actually helping my singles game. So I'm not gonna kind of close the door to play doubles. I'm going to open it a little more in the future, I think, because I think it helps my return game and my volley game and so on.

I have been playing with a few different players in the last year, and I enjoy it more now. I'm going to see if I can continue to do that next year. So if he wants to, I'm going to be ready, that's for sure.

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