

Laver Cup

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San Francisco, California, USA

Chase Center

Team World

Captain Andre Agassi

Vice Captain Patrick Rafter

Joao Fonseca

Alex de Minaur

Taylor Fritz

Francisco Cerundolo

Alex Michelsen

Reilly Opelka

Press Conference



LAVEL CUP

this right here, you know. I mean that respectfully, though.

THE MODERATOR: I'll move over to Pat then very quickly. Pat, it's quite interesting the Captain/Vice Captain, it's the baseline returner and the serve volley, chip charger of yesteryear. How has it been for you being in this team environment, because as Aussies, it's an environment that we've always enjoyed?

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Yeah, we've got a big taste of it through the Davis Cup, yourself and I, Todd. Then having a bit of involvement in Davis Cup later on, thinking coming into the Laver Cup could be quite similar, but it's actually not in many ways.

We've got guys from all around the world playing, and what has probably struck me the most is the buy-in from the players. It's just all of a sudden elevated myself with this whole event as well with Andre. I'm just so engaged now. Everyone is pumped up to win it.

You know, I guess I had a preconceived idea of how the event would be run, how it would be played, but it's very different being here and on the ground. I'm just so happy to be amongst all these guys, getting to know them and watch them play tomorrow. It's going to be on for young and old. I can't wait.

THE MODERATOR: Well, talk about being on tomorrow, Reilly, great to have you back. There was a period where you were in the team, and then obviously some injuries and things have kept you out of the game. How good is it to be back in and amongst these type of guys contending, and then also talk about your first matchup tomorrow, if you could.

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, really nice to be back. You know, when I played my first Laver Cup in Boston, it was one of the best experiences I've had. Playing for a legend like Mac was cool, and getting to play for another legend like Andre is even more special.

We really value getting the time in with Andre and Pat. It's really incredible. He's got a really unique mind, and just taking it all in and getting all the pointers we can.

Obviously I have a tough matchup with Casper, and I've had some good practices, and I feel really good. My game feels like it's in a good spot. Andre has been really special and preaching clarity and conviction. Yeah, it's really motivated me to play some good tennis.

THE MODERATOR: Joao, youngest ever to play in the . . . when all is said, we're done.®

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome, once again, to our press conference with Team World. We've already heard from Team Europe today. The first question I want to go to is to you, Andre. Welcome to you. 12 months ago in Berlin you were over watching the event, sitting in a corporate suite, taking it all in. How has it been now living it?

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: Yeah, well, I tell you, going there, I wasn't sure what to expect, but when I was there, you could tell that it meant a great deal to every sort of component of it, right? You could see the players care about what they were doing. I mean, what they brought to the table was the best of themselves.

The coaches have always talked about, talking to John and Bjorn in the past, about how exciting it is from their perspective. I kind of called a little Yahtzee on that. I'm going, You're just saying that. Then I go there, and I see how into it they are.

Then the hospitality side, the sponsors, I mean, for the fans, from every -- talking to them, they would rather spend the weekend at this event in some cases than maybe even if they were lucky enough to go to a Grand Slam semis and finals, because you never know what you are going to see, but you know what you're going to get in the sense that all these players are great, and you might get the most interesting matchup that you never would have expected.

I was really impressed. Yeah, but the best part of it for me is being around these guys. I have to be honest. Not



Laver Cup. Being in this environment, just explain what the week has been like so far for you and what your expectations are as we move through the weekend.

JOAO FONSECA: I mean, it's a pleasure being with those guys. I'm saying that I'm only listening. I'm not taking. I'm just only listening, having some experience from those guys and learning a lot.

So, yeah, enjoying a lot this week. Yeah, taking everything I can as an opportunity to learn, and hopefully getting the W for the Team World, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, there's a few rookies this weekend in both teams. You're one of them. Getting to play in your home state, you're like the local. How has it been for you? Are you enjoying it?

ALEX MICHELSEN: Yeah, I'm enjoying it a lot. Playing in a home state is always special. There's not a ton of tournaments. We have Indian Wells. That's about it. Getting to spend an extra week in the home state is always nice.

It's going to be a battle with Mr. Mensik. We played a bunch in juniors, so it will be our first time playing on the pro stage. I'm looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: I want to ask you in particular about the opportunity to maybe pick the brain of somebody like Andre. What has that experience been like?

ALEX MICHELSEN: It's been incredible. Like Reilly said, he has a very unique mind, and he's helped me a lot with my return this week. He had an average return, I guess (smiling). I mean, he's all right. He's helped me a ton. You know, clarity, conviction, lots of wisdom. Super pumped to get fired up for him tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Francisco, back again. You've had good success. 2-0 in the tournament. You've played that role generally of playing early in the first day. It's a very different Laver Cup for you this time. You're going to be in and out on various occasions. How is the experience going to help you with all of that?

FRANCISCO CERUNDOLO: Yeah, well, first time playing on Saturday for me, as you said, but super happy to be here again with the team. I mean, with Andre, Pat, the first time that I met them, trying to learn and absorb as much as I can.

Yeah, I try to use my little bit of experience on the matches that I come to play. Yeah, super excited and try to give my best for this team.

THE MODERATOR: Fantastic. Alex, a late addition, but great to be able to have an Australian in the World Team. What about having Pat here this year and being able to

use somebody like him, who you haven't been around that much?

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, look, it's great to be here, to be a part of an amazing team, and obviously to be able to pick Pat's brain.

Yeah, looks like I'm going to be serve and volleying first and second all weekend (laughing). Maybe a slight adjustment to my normal game style.

No, honestly, it's been a blast. I'm very excited to be a part of Team World with these amazing competitors and to pick not only Pat's, but Andre's brain. It's epic, right? You don't get these opportunities often.

THE MODERATOR: What about yesterday? I know that you had a photo with Pat and with Rod Laver himself. When you get that opportunity, what goes through your mind?

ALEX de MINAUR: Those are the type of "pinch me" moments. Obviously as an Aussie growing up, you hear of the greats, and to be able to spend time talking tennis with these greats, it doesn't have a price tag. These moments are incredible in my career, and I'm very, very fortunate to be in this position. So definitely not taking it for granted.

THE MODERATOR: Taylor, you come in as the leading points scorer in your team. The Laver Cup itself, when you look back on it, has had quite an effect on your career. Why has that been, and what's so important to?

TAYLOR FRITZ: I've always just enjoyed these team competitions, these weeks where I can hang out with the team, cheer for them when I'm on the bench, get the energy from them when I'm on the court. I think it makes a really big difference.

I think it's an honor to play this event. I've always really looked forward to coming back and trying to get wins for Team World.

THE MODERATOR: Just quickly, about tomorrow as well, because doubles, as we know, for Team World has been crucial. You're up with Alex tomorrow. How do we work on those partnerships and making those decisions?

TAYLOR FRITZ: Yeah, it's tough. Obviously we had to submit the line-up for tomorrow yesterday before we even really got a chance to practice and work with teams. We know some teams that have played together before, but we all trust Alex on the doubles court.

Last year I came out on day one with Ben, and we were able to get a win. So I think we kind of just went with that and decided that we were going to go with this team.

THE MODERATOR: I'll open it up to the journalists on the floor.

Q. Andre, they've all obviously been listening to you, and you said earlier the challenge for you would be listening and finding out who these guys are. I wondered if you had discovered who they are a little bit this week?

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: Well, I mean, to the degree that you can, absolutely. I think the most important thing is to understand how they process. We all work so differently. I mean, so different.

That's going to be so important to understand in real-time what they're looking for... information, clarity, focus, energy. Everybody responds differently.

I've had a chance to talk to a few of their coaches as well. It's hard to parachute in these guys' lives and act like you know everything. I don't. I'm trying not to interfere with what they already do so great that makes them here in the first place. That's number one.

Trying to learn is the first role as being the Captain. A lot of considerations heading into this weekend. The only one thing I'm clear about are what I don't know. What I don't know is what I've never experienced. So I'm trying to do as much learning as all these young men have sort of suggested they're trying to do.

Having that bond has been great. Yeah, the time on the court has been wonderful. My motivation has been sort of two-fold. It's been big picture of their career as they develop into who they want to be as a player and their identity on the tennis court, and maybe there's a north star I can sort of shine a light on or shine a light on where I see them and what they're capable of.

The other is finding little ways maybe to add a nuance. We're all fighting for margins and edges out there. You don't realize how important they are until you live the life that they have to live on a daily basis. So I think there's just a healthy regard and respect for being together, and we're going to do our best to be there for each other.

Q. Reilly, you mentioned some things that you've learned from Andre this week. What did you learn about Andre this week, kind of behind the scenes that fans don't really know about that you discovered maybe about him?

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: You can say it, Reilly. It's all right (laughing).

REILLY OPELKA: Andre is such a legend of the game. You always hear so much about him. The consensus is he's just this incredibly nice human being and incredibly intelligent.

This is my first time really getting to interact with him. I was always jealous because Tommy Paul and Frances got to hang with him when they were younger in Vegas, and he had them out for a training camp.

I mean, the story pretty much was I think the USTA was looking to send a group of young guys to train with some of the guys. I think they called and put some feelers out to some other legendary American players. I don't know if the price was right. I think Andre did it for free and spent two weeks with Tommy and Frances and all the guys.

I think that kind of sums up my experience with Andre as best you can. He gives back to the game and is happy to spread knowledge. Yeah, he's just been a great asset for tennis and especially American tennis.

Q. For this Alex, you started your Davis Cup career as an orange boy, which meant that you were charged with getting oranges and water and everything for your teammates. Now you're talking about "pinch me" moments with Rafter and with Rod Laver. When you look at the sum total, what does it tell you about where you're sitting right now with all these guys?

ALEX de MINAUR: Yeah, I mean, in the sport that we live in, everything is very fast-paced, right? So you don't really get a second to sit back and kind of realize what you've been able to achieve or what this sport has given you.

There's always moments like that and like sitting down with Rod and Pat or being a part of this amazing team where you get a second to yourself to kind of get a step back and, you know, be proud of what you've achieved. So it's not often in the sport, because you are playing from one week to the other, but every now and again you get a second to take a step back and realize what you've achieved. Those are nice moments.

Q. This is for Andre. Obviously you played in the Bay Area for many, many years, and there was a time you had a home here. Could you talk about the one or two most special moments on court playing here, and what is your take about the Bay Area? It's a pretty special place. What's your take on the Bay?

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: Yeah, no, a lot of good results here. You know, it came at a great time of the year. For a good chunk of those years, every year that it was played here, I actually never played Australia, so it was a great way for me to get started in the year with not just a perfect environment indoors, but in the Bay Area. I fell in love with it then.

Unfortunately, a long time ago they moved it to San Jose,

so we got a great city in our world that hasn't had the chance to have this level of tennis come to the backyard. That to me only seems right that we can do that, both for the community, but also for tennis. I think it's a win to have San Francisco engaged in that.

I lived here for about six years. Where we took the photo yesterday, all of us together, I used to look at that view from just the other hill. So I miss it in a lot of ways.

Yeah, so bringing it back to this stadium here is incredible, right? I've been here for a few Warriors games. By the end of this weekend you're going to say, Okay, you got the Golden State Warriors, and you got these warriors, because that's our game plan, to live up to the standard this place deserves.

Q. I guess this question is for Pat. It could be really for anybody, but I want to talk about the other locker room. Obviously we got a lot of good talent over there, but there's one guy in particular who has been on kind of a roll, Carlos Alcaraz. I'm wondering how you game plan to beat Carlos?

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Well --

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: Chip charge.

ALEX de MINAUR: We talked about this, right?

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Yeah, I am having a bit of trouble trying to convince my players that chip charge does work. Probably not on this court, though.

Well, first match will be on Saturday, and we don't get to pick who plays Alcaraz. Is that correct?

TAYLOR FRITZ: That is correct.

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Have we submitted that yet?

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: No, we don't need to. Friday night.

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Do they know that, though?

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: Does who know what?

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Do they know the whole Saturday, Sunday... Have I blown it?

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: They do now.

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: They do now.

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: We had to submit it. It doesn't matter.

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Anyway, that's how much I know what's going on.

I mean, Alcaraz is a weapon. He's someone who is at the top of his game right now, and him and Sinner are dominating a lot of the tournaments.

This is a format, though, that creates -- there's two sets. Every one of these guys are capable to win the set against anyone at any given time, put themselves in a situation to play in the tiebreaker to win the match. Anything is possible. That's what I love about the concept of this event also.

You need to throw something different at him as well. I mean, the guy has serious power. He's a great athlete, but everyone is vulnerable at certain times. It's about trying to go in there and coming up with a game plan when we know this, which will come out probably tomorrow, on who matches up, and then sitting down and strategizing.

Andre and I will sit down and talk to whoever gets to play him and come up with some ideas. You're right, he's tough. He's brutal, and he's at the top of his game.

Let's just hope that he had a good week off after the US Open, and he hasn't recovered (laughter).

Q. I just wondered, this could be to any of you sitting up there. The Laver Cup, which has been known for its great innovation, the Next Gen Finals, UTS, are there things that you could take from any of those if we think about the game where it's going to be in five to ten years, as tennis looks to keep evolving and keep attracting eyeballs, because this event has had some great innovation, along with those other concepts, that maybe could come into our life in the future?

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: Not anybody? Yeah, that's kind of a big-picture question. I mean, in the sense that one of the things -- I'll just give from you my lens, right? I went through a good 15 years of raising my kids and finishing up my foundation in a way that it can live in perpetuity and building a few businesses, and now my kids are -- we're kind of empty-nesters, and I had the band width to come back to tennis on a certain level and really appreciate the difference between what it was and what it is now.

I played through a few generations myself, and I was always shocked at what was asked of the changes that happened, both from players to environments and the growth of it. I go back to these places, and I don't even recognize them. I can't get from one place to another, because they've changed that much.

People can talk about eyeballs. They can talk about the growth of the game or the lack of growth. Every time I see it, it's only expanding, it's only growing. It doesn't do that unless it's generating, and it doesn't generate unless there are more people that want a part of it.

The premise of your question is sort of based on the assumption that it's maybe not growing like it should, and from my perspective, I haven't experienced that. I mean, everywhere I go I just go, Holy crap.

You're right, these events are spectacular, these team events, because we're an individual sport. There's always room for innovation, but you know...

Yeah, you talk to me on Monday, but right now we got Friday, Saturday, and Sunday on our mind.

Q. I wanted to ask the coaches, Andre and Pat, you have a collection of players from many different countries here, not just USA. You have two South Americas. You have an Australian. That's a lot of, like, ways of doing things, attitudes, idiosyncrasies, know-how that comes from many different places. How are you absorbing that, and as leaders, facilitating that mutual learning, that spread of knowledge in a way that makes you all better for this weekend specifically, but also moving forward?

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: You got this one.

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: I think first rule of engagement with anybody in life is to convince them you have two ears and one mouth. So you do a lot of listening. You do a lot of observing.

I didn't want to miss one second on the court, because the slightest thing a player does kind of can expose or sort of suggest how they process and how they think, right? I just always want to be ready to absorb what they may be feeling or not or maybe say something that might not be so relevant, but it might be important for me to see if that's something that they respond to or not. Just doing a lot of learning.

I think the first job is not to get in their way. It would be hard to convince me that I play enough of a role that I'm going to do any winning out there, you know, but I think I could screw it up. That's how I look at it.

I could help them. I could distract them, or I could make it about what it's not. It's not about that. You earn respect. You don't demand it. So much respect about these guys.

Also, their confidence... I mean, there's not a player on this team that doesn't think they can do the job if the job fell on their shoulders. I respect the hell out of that.

You're right. We're facing the other side that brings a lot to the table as well. I haven't had the luxury of spending time over there, nor do I want to, because I'm here.

A lot of competitiveness going on with this team, and it starts with ourselves. That includes me when I'm around them or when I'm thinking about things.

THE MODERATOR: Pat, would you like to add?

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Not really (laughter). I think there's a really good combination between myself and Andre, and we are sort of reading the room pretty well. It's great that the South Americas speak unbelievable English, because if they didn't, we're screwed, effectively.

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: No, we would have Alex interpret. He speaks great Spanish.

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Certain guys want to work on a few things, and others don't. They're really happy in where they're at. So Andre and I read that room and say, Yep, we're good with this space, and let's leave that alone.

Then we try and throw a few ideas at them, and some might stick, some might not. As you said, we can definitely stuff it up by overcomplicating it for them, and that's the area that we've got to be careful on treading on these guys.

They have to play their game. They have to be confident in their game, and if one or two ideas rub off, then great. If they don't, that's okay.

As I said, I can fall into the trap of giving too much information too quickly as well, and we're very careful and mindful of that.

Q. I'm getting an Uber Eats order. I was just wondering if you guys want anything? That's open to Team World.

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: That's really cool. We have our --

TAYLOR FRITZ: I was going to say, From where?

Q. I was thinking Chipotle, but it's my first time in the Bay. You know, I'm thinking pad thai too if you guys want to do that.

CAPTAIN ANDRE AGASSI: That sounds a little risky on the intestines.

REILLY OPELKA: A little chicken pad thai never hurt anybody.

Q. I know you have the Chipotle deal. We could team in on that if you want to.

TAYLOR FRITZ: Depends where you are ordering from, you know? Chipotle, I'll get a bowl.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, everybody. Best of luck to Team World on the weekend. We'll see you out on court tomorrow. Thank you.

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