Laver Cup

Friday, 19 September 2025 San Francisco, California, USA Chase Center

Tony Godsick Steve Zacks

Press Conference

TODD WOODBRIDGE: Good afternoon, everybody, and thank you for joining us. It is almost game time. We're looking forward to the players getting out on the court, but before we do that, we have this small opportunity to talk to two of the real minds of putting the Laver Cup together. It's a warm welcome to Tony Godsick, the Chair of Laver Cup, and to the CEO, Steve Zacks. Great to have you both with us.

I'm going to get things started a little bit today. Tony, the eighth edition we're about to get underway. Firstly, you've got to be proud of how this event has sort of imprinted itself onto the tennis calendar.

TONY GODSICK: Absolutely. First of all, welcome, everybody, to the Laver Cup. I hope you have a great weekend. Not only here in the Chase Center, but in the Bay Area. I think we're all super excited, eighth year. We've definitely exceeded our expectations. Basically our eighth sell-out. Players love it. We've gone from six sponsors to 22 sponsors. A lot of electricity, great press. I say, again, for those of you that have travelled from different places, thank you for doing that.

We're looking forward to a great year, and certainly really proud of the team. Hopefully you get a chance to walk around a little bit and look at some of the details and the investments we make in building this brand. Looking forward to a great weekend.

TODD WOODBRIDGE: Steve, for you, you live it day-to-day trying to put this event together. There must be some difficulties along the way, but then when you get to a place like this and see it all pulled together, that must make you feel quite proud.

STEVE ZACKS: Well, it's definitely rewarding for everybody. This has been probably one of the easiest years, because it's such an amazing venue, great team that we're working with here, and the market has really embraced us so well.

You know, we look forward to the first ball just like everybody else. Ready to enjoy it.



TODD WOODBRIDGE: Let's open it up to the floor if anyone would like to ask some questions, please.

Q. Tony, you have two famous captains. Now they're back in the spotlight. What do you hope kind of the new generation of tennis fans learns about these two guys this week?

TONY GODSICK: So I think when we created and conceptualized the Laver Cup, this was exactly one of the things that Roger and I and Steve wanted to try to do, which was to bring these legends who maybe you don't see all the time or certainly to have an opportunity for the players, the current players, to get coached by, to have an opportunity to rub shoulders and learn from them.

So McEnroe and Borg were amazing. I mean, we originally signed them up just for a couple of years, and they ended up staying for seven editions, which is amazing. Now you have Andre Agassi. I don't want to date him, but certainly when I was growing up, I mean, he was everything. He was the biggest thing in tennis.

For him now to sort of -- you know, he's been in the game doing some things as of late. For him to be able to be on the sideline, and I was just out there the last couple of days watching practice. I mean, he's really getting in there with the players. I think that's amazing.

Yannick Noah, this guy is so unique. People don't realize. He had the most incredible tennis career. The last French man to win the French Open. He also sells out Stade de France being a pop star. There's very few people in this world that get a chance to do that. He won the Davis Cup. He won the Fed Cup coaching. Now he's here at the Laver Cup. These players today, this generation of players, would never have had an opportunity, I guess unless you were French, to be coached by him. He's amazing. His personality, his knowledge is amazing.

Then Pat Rafter, I'm sorry, if there's anybody on Team World that wants to get better at serving and volleying, you have an opportunity for one week to pick the brain of probably one of the greatest athletes who ever did that. I mean, he's the Vice Captain. He's a former No. 1 player in the world, two-time Grand Slam champion. That's amazing.

I read an article this morning. He's not around tennis that much. He's obviously around the Australian Open, but then here we are having him sort of rub shoulders with these players. It's great.



Then Tim Henman, another great serve and volleyer, someone who knows a lot about the game. I always say that these commentators that are out there doing the matches in the slams week in and week out, like a Tim Henman with the BBC and Sky and stuff, they actually are really seeing what all the players are doing. They have all the access to the data, you know, from their teams.

Tim is an incredible mind. So he has the opportunity to teach some of these players on Team Europe some of the things he's been learning. I think it's great.

But to bring the star power of Andre Agassi back out there, it's exciting.

Q. I'll put this out to both of you. San Francisco was once really sort of a tennis epicenter in a lot of ways. I'm thinking Barry MacKay and the old Transamerica Tournament, and all the great players that have come out of this area. Golden Gate Park has been a hotspot for players and then kind of it's disappeared a little bit. Just talk about putting tennis back on the map here in a pretty special city.

TONY GODSICK: Let me start and then I'll let Steve say something. First of all, Helen Moody, Don Budge, you've got to start with them. They were from here. Some of the oldest tennis clubs in the United States are here.

Huge history of tennis in recent years, you know, with the SAP Open, which I know Andre played a lot and all the top Americans used to play. The Bank of the West was at Stanford. Then it went to San Jose. This community had professional tennis for a very long time, and then it all left, as you mentioned.

Having an opportunity to bring some of the best players in the world back to this community, we knew was going to be special, but we had no idea that the excitement was going to be as great as it has been, and the market spoke. Ticket sales sponsorship. You can tell that this community is super excited.

We hope that by bringing it here, there will be something that can stay. I mean, I tell you what, I mean, Steve and I talk about this all the time. We would love to stay here. You know, if we could keep the Laver Cup at this arena for a long -- I mean, this is a proper arena. These guys know what they're doing behind the scenes. The building is unbelievable. It's accessible. If you haven't had a chance to go out to Thrive City and see the Fan Zone, we haven't had a Fan Zone like that before.

Hopefully we can leave a legacy here and really inspire some promoters, whoever it might be, to come back here. Maybe it's us. Maybe it's something else, but this place has the -- you can feel that they were desperate and thirsty for something, and we're luckily the beneficiaries of that thirst, for sure.

STEVE ZACKS: There's not a lot I can add. You know, in addition to running the tournament and bringing that to the people, we're doing other things to connect with the community.

You saw that we refurbished some courts. We had 2,000 kids come out yesterday for practice day. We've got the Fan Zone that's open for free. We've got a speed of serve and accuracy contest for anyone in the city to come down and win some prize. We're doing all the things we can to inspire people.

As Tony said, every year we start out, we don't know what the response is going to be. It's kind of like a do-over even though we're an established tournament with a lot of expectations and a lot of fans that travel to see us. We couldn't have been happier with how it went.

Q. You're bringing new sponsorships in. What does the Laver Cup provide for a sponsor that's maybe unique in the world of tennis?

TONY GODSICK: I'm happy to go. It's a premium event. We move around to some pretty iconic cities. From a client entertainment standpoint, I think it's unmatched, from hospitality standpoint.

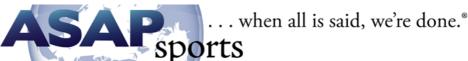
If you are a tennis fan -- let's say Bill is a tennis fan, and he wants to go to a major to watch Carlos Alcaraz play, and he buys a ticket for Tuesday day session. Carlos plays Tuesday night. He's out of luck. He came all the way from California, and he can't see him.

Here you see the best players. You get to see them play singles, doubles. You get it over a short, condensed, three-day, five-session event. I think from that standpoint, you know, we're very unique.

Rivals becoming teammates, it's a phrase that Steve came up with years ago when we were building the brand, and it's true. The Laver Cup provides a platform for these players that are grinding, beating each other up week after week to actually become teammates. Then the optics that you see that get pushed out are really unique. It just doesn't happen anywhere else.

I think the sponsors really enjoy the innovative format. You know, I think if you have a chance to go see, again -- the sad part about all this is we break all this down with the help of a lot of people on Sunday night, but we put so much energy into building what we hope people think is like a permanent event for a small period of time.

Sponsors see it too, and they feel like we're investing in the brand and the experience for their clients and the quests.



Tennis is a global sport, so people are watching this all around the world. You know, how people are consuming sport is so different today. I have two kids. Certainly my younger son, he's watching short-form clips on YouTube. He's watching clips on Instagram, TikTok, all the different things. So we're pushing out a lot of that stuff as well. I think the sponsors who are joining us for this journey are not only requiring it, but are enjoying it and helping us actually grow it too.

There's a lot of different things that Steve and our team are doing that is maybe more modern than other people are doing, but I think that hopefully our sponsors feel that we're really pushing the envelope a little bit and presenting the sport in a different way.

Q. Just picking up on something you mentioned, is it a goal -- I guess two questions. The first is, is it a goal to have a quasi-permanent place? I know you go from basically Europe to the U.S., but are you in the market to sort of plant a flag somewhere and be at that place for a while? In addition, the second question, I was wondering if you could just explain through this sort of rash of injuries that happened in the last couple of weeks and sort of the challenge of cobbling together, especially on the Team World side, a group that could compete with the team you had on the other side? I know you deal with availability and all kinds of other complications in the tennis world. How does that sort of play into your format and your thinking moving forward?

STEVE ZACKS: I mean, you are intimately familiar with the tennis calendar and some of the rules. Look, when we work with the Captains to build their teams, you know the top three players based on ranking after the French Open automatically earn a spot, and then the captains get to pick the other three. Plus, there's an alternate.

You know, it's a challenging situation. If we look at the World side, we had going into it, I think it was Shelton, Fritz, and de Minaur who are the top three. So Shelton and Fritz committed. De Minaur had planned to play the Davis Cup, and that was going to be a challenging return to San Francisco.

Just as a quick aside, when we began the Laver Cup in 2017, that wouldn't have been the situation, because he wouldn't have been playing Davis Cup that week. So he told us that that would be challenging this year, as much as he would like to play.

Andre early on wanted to get Joao Fonseca, who is having a great start of the season onto the team. Clearly, he's appealing worldwide, but at the same time, was moving up the rankings very quickly and hadn't even played a full season.

From there, they watch who else is available and doing

well, and it's tricky, because even as they're waiting to see who they would like to pick, many of these players are trying to find out will they qualify and be picked for the Laver Cup, or should they commit to another tournament on the same week, because they want to stay active? They need to do that by the week before the US Open.

So this year Andre ended up adding Francisco Cerundolo and -- help me. I'm blanking right now.

TONY GODSICK: Michelsen.

STEVE ZACKS: Michelsen agreed to be the alternate and --

TONY GODSICK: Opelka came in.

STEVE ZACKS: I'm sorry. They had their team of six. And Tommy, of course. I'm forgetting Tommy. Tommy committed very early. Then we had the US Open.

So you've got to picture this. A lot of guys want to play. They aren't making the team. We've got the team of six. They commit to play in Asia. At the same time we look at, with the captains, who might still be available if any injuries occur. You know, we make arrangements with them that they would come in if somebody gets injured.

In the case of this year, it was unprecedented in terms of what happened. So, first -- I can't remember the order, but I think it may have been Ben got injured right in the middle of a match at the US Open. He did his best to finish, but then he was shut down. So he notified us immediately of that case.

Tommy Paul, I don't think it's a secret, was playing with a sports hernia, was taking painkiller. I'm trying to remember who he ended up losing to in a five-setter after he had already played another five-setter. After consultation, he decided to get surgery and was out.

Then, lastly, I think we all know that Frances has been public that he hasn't been performing up to his expectations and sort of removed himself to focus on earning points. We've talked about that before.

So with all that in mind, it was, like, who are the best guys available that they could possibly add to the team? Andre has his opinions on who he would like. Now, certainly Felix had an incredible US Open. Everyone would say, Well, just why are you not picking Felix? Well, I think his wedding is tomorrow, if I'm remembering correctly.

TONY GODSICK: We offered to have the wedding here on center court, but...

STEVE ZACKS: I was crazy enough that I called his

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agent and said, Is there any chance?

TONY GODSICK: Steve would have paid for the wedding.

STEVE ZACKS: So he was out. I think there was an article today, What about Popyrin? Popyrin was playing in Australia as well. Clearly, quality player. That was going to be challenging to get.

Shapo, who has had some recent return to strength after having a good start of the year, also getting married. I think we would have been in the middle of his honeymoon. I don't know his exact plans.

We try and get all the information. Can't get everything. So they took the best of what they thought they could build a good team. It has nothing to do -- someone might say, Are they looking for Americans or anything like that? Now, certainly Andre may pick people that he's familiar with, and that could have that kind of influence, but it's really just based on who they trust.

He's sitting there on the bench. He's got his reputation on the line and is trying to win, and he's picking the best people committee.

So Opelka was available. They believe in him. Michelsen had already committed to being on the bench, and then he moved up. Then as I saw some reporting today and has been out there, we reached out to de Minaur and said, Hey, would you reconsider? Rafter has a relationship, was able to use that influence. I give him a lot of credit for coming back and giving it his best. I think that really adds a lot to the team.

TONY GODSICK: The second thing, look, when we created this the idea was to rotate between a European city and a rest of the world city. It's happened that we've been at the Boston Garden, the United Center, and a year in Vancouver. We obviously can do anything. We can do whatever we want. We're building this thing.

We always compare ourselves to the Ryder Cup. They've got 97-year head start on us, or whatever it is. So we're tinkering with it.

It's not a secret too, I've said it enough now in a few interviews, that when we conceptualized this idea, Roger and I wanted to rotate this around to the four Grand Slam sites. It was named after Rod Laver. These are facilities that had spent over \$1 billion collectively putting roofs on these stadiums.

You can imagine going in there. It's a lot easier to just plug into an existing Grand Slam site as it is to these buildings that actually don't see tennis every day. The seating is there. The media center is there. The hospitality areas have been designed just for big events.

When we started this thing, we had two investors that were Grand Slams in the USTA and Tennis Australia. Maybe that's something in the future that happens is we rotate this around, because I do know people can't get access to the Grand Slam sites. There's not enough tickets to be sold to go to some of these venues during the actual slams, so maybe it would be nice to rotate it around. One day it could morph into something like that.

Another day we could find ourselves -- we're going back to the O2, which is the first time we've gone back to an arena that we've already been at. We had a really positive, successful, great experience not just with Roger's retirement, but from the business side of it and the logistics and ticket sales. We're going to go back there.

Who knows? If it's great here, maybe we come back here. If there's another city, we can do that. Maybe we go three years in one city. There's so many things we can do with it, but one of the things that we are fortunate enough is we're on the ATP Tour. We're a sanctioned event. We're on their calendar.

We're always in constant conversations with the ATP, with Andrea and his team, and Ross Hutchins, who is moving over to the ITF, which I think will be great for Ross. He's a wonderful executive, a great young executive in the sport. He'll have some ideas and stuff like that.

Who knows, but what we do want to do, we like this date. It's successful. Steve and I always joke. People are like, Oh, you got to move, you got to move. Sold out, 22 sponsors, players like it. So what, should we cancel the event or what?

So everything is going well. This format works. This sort of rotation works, but if there's something that could work better, we're always looking at it.

Q. If I could, guys, I just wanted to thank you for bringing this experience to --

STEVE ZACKS: This is a real California tennis media guy. He's amazing.

Q. Thanks for the investment, attention to detail. This one is for you, Tony, a two-parter: I'm guessing in 2015, 2016 you're in that storied taxi cab in Shanghai.

TONY GODSICK: It was a Mercedes. Not a taxi cab. Mercedes was the official sponsor of the tournament, but we can call it a taxi if you want. Waymo maybe.

Q. Anyway, you're with your client. I forget his name. He suggests having an event to honor Rod,

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honor the legacy of the game. What was your flash response at that moment? If you could talk to that Mercedes driver now, what would you say in terms of, Look how far we've come, baby. Part two of the question is, what happened? Why the San Francisco choice? We know that your son is a Stanford guy, and his coach lives here, but was there a moment in the early process to choose San Francisco?

TONY GODSICK: Okay, so the first question... so just the other day was the 20-year anniversary of signing Roger after he beat Andre at the US Open in 2005. I've learned when he has an idea, you don't say no. That's worked out pretty well.

I was jet lagged, because I had just arrived that day, I remember, at like 3:00 in the afternoon. I remember being tired. He's, like, I was talking to Rod, and Roger is a historian of the game, and he's really thirsty for knowledge, and he really wants to know what it was like for Tony Roche and Fred Stolle and Rod Laver.

He spending some time at this sponsor event. He said, We should do something to honor Rod Laver and his contemporaries, they barnstormed. I said, What do you have in mind? He said, I don't know, an event, a sponsor, something. Not to give Rod money, but more to honor what they achieved.

We heard it from John McEnroe. John McEnroe is such a good orator. He did such a good job last night basically trying to educate the guys behind him, the current players, what Rod Laver and his contemporaries did.

This calendar year Grand Slam that he won and then he took off, can you imagine asking a player today to take off four-plus years of Grand Slams to usher in the professional game for a bunch of kids that you don't know maybe? I don't see it happening.

Anyway, so he said, Let's do it. Most important thing, and I always talk to kids when I'm talking to young students and stuff, I always say, The most important thing you can do is partner with great people. Partnering with Roger, had a great idea. Finding this guy, great idea. Getting the best sponsors, great idea. Getting the best players together to launch it.

So I think if I ran into that driver, I am going back to Shanghai for the Shanghai Rolex Masters in a couple of weeks. Maybe I'll see. I actually don't remember who he is, but if I do, I would say, Hey, with a lot of help from a lot of people, some great brands, some players that sort of leaned in, John McEnroe, Bjorn Borg, who leaned in, now Andre and Pat, we've created something extremely special, something that we're all really proud of and that we hope we can share with more fans around the world and do different things.

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But it is exciting. Roger does every once in a while pat me on the back and say, Hey, we've really created something that's cool. Isn't that fun?

As soon as this event is over on Monday, we sit down, Steve, Roger, and I, and we write down what went right, what went wrong, what could we do better, we talk to the players. Ultimately, Roger had been on tour for 25-plus years, and he was able to pick out all of the good things he liked and the things he didn't like. Anyway, hopefully the driver would be pretty proud of what was going on.

Then with the second question is we looked at this building. I mean, you guys are here now. This is an amazing facility. They wanted us to come. The city wanted us to be here.

I do joke from time to time. My daughter went to school up in New England at Dartmouth, and I made a joke that I put a Laver Cup in Boston so that she could come down while she was in school, and so my son was, like, Oh, she's your favorite kid. I said, Okay, we'll put one in San Francisco so when you are at Stanford, you can, which wasn't true.

Anyway, as we talked before, this is an incredible tennis community. NorCal is amazing. You see the success of Indian Wells. I can promise you if you asked everyone to just stop in the crowd today, raise your hand if you've been to Indian Wells in recent years, you would probably have 75% of the people maybe or 50% of the people would say, We've been there.

It's a huge tennis state. It's accessible. The airports are amazing. Everything about this place to run an event like this, which is global, is perfect. I mean, honestly, this airport is so close. You can get anywhere. The guys are off to Asia. They can get on nonstop flights to any, Japan, China, whatever you want to do. They're nonstop flights. I know that Roger's family just arrive from Zurich. Nonstop flight on Swiss. It works.

They wanted us here, and that's cool. I remember Joe Lacob said -- and Steve and I always laugh. It was like the biggest compliment. He said, Oh -- this was about a year ago when we were doing ticket-on-sale event when Roger was here. He said, The Bay Area is going to be the epicenter of sports here in the next year. We've got the NBA All-Star game. We've got the Laver Cup, and then we've got the Super Bowl.

I said to Steve after, We just got sandwiched in between the NBA and the Super Bowl. That is the greatest compliment that you can have. I've got to find that quote somewhere, because we can maybe put in our office.

Anyway, great city. Fans are amazing. The business community... obviously you hear the word AI everywhere, and it's all sort of going down here. Yeah, so we love the

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decision we made, and hopefully it's an amazing weekend.

Q. You sort of answered my question about potentially where this tournament could go outside of Europe and the U.S. Do you see this week as being sort of that permanent slot? I mean, obviously, the tennis calendar is the biggest talking point in the next couple of years and how that's going to look like whether the season becomes condensed, back-to-back sort of with Davis Cup. Would you like some separation maybe from Davis Cup, or is this sort of the week that best suits having the Laver Cup, or is it open to maybe shifting to another part of the year?

STEVE ZACKS: Well, certainly the tour keeps changing. I think I mentioned earlier when we started, I think the Davis Cup the week before us was not as active with all these semifinals and so forth going on. So all of the best players weren't playing then.

The Laver Cup week was on top of St. Petersburg and Metz, France. A lot of the top players took that week off. The Asian swing started the week after us with 250s. There's been, if you want to call it, encroachment over the last eight years. That certainly has made it more challenging for the players if they want to play the Laver Cup, to do it, right? They're making some choices.

So, you know, Tony and I discussed that we have to do what's best for the tournament. We like where we are right now, but you know, we don't control all of those other moves. Like any good business, we have to react.

TONY GODSICK: Yeah, if we ever found a place that would be better for us, we would consider it. Again, sponsor sales are at an all-time high. Ticket sales are at an all-time high. Players are liking to play. It works.

You know, the Davis Cup has moved around. I think it's changed, like, three times its format in the seven editions that we've had. That's a lot of change, when I'm not sure it actually should have changed.

I have a whole theory that, you know, Davis Cup was actually pretty good the way it was. You had some major global superstars that dominated the game for a very long period of time, and each of them prioritized the Davis Cup at different times. Then they wanted to stay out on tour a lot longer. They maybe didn't play as much, because they wanted to extend their careers, and it worked.

Novak is still playing today. Rafa just retired last year. Roger went to almost 40. So it worked, their strategy. But the fact that they were taking up so much oxygen of success for such a long period of time, people are like, Oh, all the top players aren't playing the Davis Cup,

we've got to change it.

Well, that was those three players. I think now you've got -- okay, you have two other guys that are coming in to do well, but you have more parity, a little bit more parity now. Maybe not in the slams, but you have young stars that are emerging.

I kind of feel like if you just kind of went back and did the home and away stuff, two-out-of-three sets maybe until you get to the finals, and you kept it how it was, it might work. Now you have other Masters 1000s that are coming in, and there's a talk of that. You've got slams that are extending their footprint by a week to do mixed doubles and other great events and spreading. I know Australia has been doing it for years with the United Cup and some great events. I remember doing a Roger Federer and Friends exhibition for his charity on the Thursday before the Grand Slam starting. It was all sold out.

There's a lot going on, but the good news is people want to see tennis, and they want to see all different forms. Let's see what happens.

I just hope we don't lose these little events as much as we are. The Indianapolises, the L.A.s, SAP up here, they're all gone. Those were pretty good events where you had ball kids who were becoming -- they were being inspired by these stars coming through town. Then the event would leave, and these kids would go off and do their tennis lessons and get better, and maybe they would become stars. We don't have those little events anymore, so let's see.

STEVE ZACKS: If I could add one thing is what we focus on is just giving everybody a great time that they want to do again. So whether it's the sponsors, whether it's the broadcasters, the players, and particularly, you know, the players, and they tell us that this is a fabulous week. They love doing it. It's a great experience, the mentoring, the team building, and the competition.

You put these great players out there. You can tell it's a fantastic competition. They want to be part of this, so that's really our focus. That's what we can control, and that's what we're focused on these next three days.

Q. Probably a nice way to wrap things up from what you were just saying, Tony, about this renewal, and the next generation is an overused phrase, isn't it, but with the new captains coming in, it's probably one of the youngest line-ups I think we've ever had in the Laver Cup? That sort of reflects what's going on in the tour right now. Just how exciting this sort of refreshment is. Then maybe to follow on, Steve, how excited some of these younger players like Alex Michelsen, Fonseca, when they first walk out there, it's got a pedigree for these youngsters walking

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through.

TONY GODSICK: The next generation is here. They're coming. The big superstars are all slowly retiring. Serena is gone. Roger is gone. Rafa is gone. Novak maybe has a little more time left, but he is certainly on the back nine.

One of the things that Steve and I always discuss with our team is, like, take an Alex Michelsen or take one of these young players coming out here, Joao Fonseca, we're going to help build their brand bigger, and they're going to jump back out on tour next week as bigger brands.

Very few of these kids -- okay, Fonseca is a phenomenon, and he plays in front of massive crowds everywhere, but he's going to play and have a chance to play in front of 17,000 people, or Alex Michelsen will. Where else is that going to happen unless he is playing one of the big monsters at a slam?

These guys, their brands will be elevated. They'll be more popular. People will know who they are. They'll be part of the vernacular, and then they'll go out on tour and hit the ATP events and the slams in coming weeks.

I think it's great. The next generation is here. They're all big and strong and fast. It's incredible. We're seeing them. I think you'll see next year -- I've already had a few of the players already came and said, How do we sign up now? I'm, like, You don't. You have to play really well. Keep your ranking up, and talk to Andre and to Yannick.

Yeah, it's exciting to see these new names coming.

STEVE ZACKS: I think it's fantastic to have a mix of some of these veterans. You have Alex Zverev playing for his sixth time. Casper Rudd, five times in a row and so forth. At the same time, new stars coming on and that you see for the first time. It makes this a really intriguing day number one with so many new people going at it. And with the Captains and their commitment, I think that's one of the great things about the event.

TODD WOODBRIDGE: Thank you very much, Tony, Steve. Good luck. Time to go get our seats, I say. Thank you.

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