

# Laver Cup

Friday, 19 September 2025

San Francisco, California, USA

Chase Center

## Team World

## Vice Captain Patrick Rafter

## Reilly Opelka

Press Conference

C. RUUD/R. Opelka

6-4, 7-6

Team Europe - 1

Team World - 0

THE MODERATOR: Reilly, a great match to kick off the Laver Cup. Obviously not quite the result you wanted. Do you want to just talk us through the match?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, I just kind of got out-served there, I would say, and I played one poor point in the breaker on my own. That was really it.

Yeah, I thought I took care of everything I needed to take care of. The court is really tough for a server, that's for sure, but I thought the way I played would have done the job or given me the 50/50 chance that I like against just about anyone... besides Carlos, of course (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Kind of frustrating because not much separated you guys today for sure, but you played him before. What makes him so tough?**

REILLY OPELKA: His serve. Yeah, he's one of the best servers in the world.

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Is he always like that?

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah.

**Q. Kind of underrated that way, huh?**

REILLY OPELKA: Not on the tour. Not from guys that play him and watch, who know. This guy was 2 in the world playing for the No. 1 spot. He was a set away from it pretty much at the US Open. I mean, if you do that in today's game with Novak around and Carlos and Jannik,



# LAVÉR CUP

that means you got a big serve and a big forehand at least.

**Q. Pat, I had my headset on listening when there was a sort of moment where you were having what looked to be a fairly intense conversation with Andre. I was curious what you were talking about and what your impressions were as you were observing the match from your position at this point?**

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: Did you listen to the conversation?

**Q. No, I said I didn't have my headphones in at the time.**

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: I don't know what I was saying to him. We could have just been talking a big pile of shit for all I know, but we were obviously having a discussion about it.

I think the intensity in my face might have been saying, I don't know what else Reilly can do here. Especially the surface, it doesn't obviously really suit him very well. But in saying that, if it was fast, I still don't know how you get back Ruud's serve today.

I think he must have made over 20 to 25 first serves in a row. I looked across at Tim Henman and went, I've never ever seen a serving display like this in my life. He just said, I totally agree. It was impressive.

Reilly hung in there, and he did everything he could. He had so much pressure on him. What I was really impressed with was if he lapses for half a split second any time in that second set, it's 6-4, 6-4. He didn't, and he held together.

When the guy is serving like that, there's not much you can do. He had to fight hard in a couple of service games. He did everything he could do. Yeah, you could have, could have, should have. Maybe I shouldn't have played that slow forehand approach in breaker, which cost him the point, but in hindsight, I know that's always easy.

I really couldn't fault him. I was just sitting there going, Mate, you're doing everything you can.

**Q. Reilly, can I just ask you, you said this surface is really tough for a server? That's what you said?**

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, I don't know if it's the surface or the ball or the combination, but it's quite unique.



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**Q. Can you expand on the uniqueness of it and just what it feels like compared with other indoor surfaces, I guess, is the only fair thing to compare it to?**

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, it's just bizarre. It's kind of like a sandpaper surface with a ball that really puffs up. You know, it's not like -- I was also able to use it for my advantage. I won a lot of points at the baseline today, because a guy like Casper, if I give him a high forehand, it's point over no matter where in the court it is. On a court like this today, I got to be able to defend and work my way back into some rallies.

It works for both sides. Yeah, I might not get 25 aces on this surface, but I'm also going to get some more chances and second, third chances at points that I normally wouldn't. He just served really well today where that wasn't the case. At one time he didn't serve great, I had a bunch of break points.

**Q. Slower would be the...**

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, it's slower than any other court you'll find in tennis.

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: What I think the difference to me with the surface is, yes, it's slow, but if you hit your targets really tight, it can still go through, like we saw with Ruud and Reilly today.

But if you miss, you miss by this far, when you are used to that ball coming through really fast and really hard, it's still a very, very difficult serve to get back. It's stopping and checking. You can't afford to miss your serve by even that far, because he's going to the hitting zones of the guys.

Yeah, you sit there and go, Why did Ruud serve so well? He hit his spots like I've never seen.

REILLY OPELKA: Yeah, great server. He's really good. It wasn't much of an anomaly on his end.

I'm not so surprised. He served maybe better than 80%, which I'm sure is above his average by a good bit, but he's still 2 in the world. Give him some credit. I'm not surprised that he serves really well and has a really big forehand. He has had an insanely good career.

**Q. This one is for Patrick. When fans think of Reilly, first thing that comes to mind, of course, is his truly incredible serve, but could you talk about other aspects of his game, other aspects of him as a player, his movement for a big man, his backhand, that sort of thing?**

VICE CAPTAIN PATRICK RAFTER: What he can do is

produce incredible amount of power from anywhere in the court, and he showed that again today. Big forehands. Probably one or two meters behind the baseline. Big backhands down the line. Crosscourt he was hitting.

And it's very uncertain for the other opposition to know how to play him, because you can't be safe from the baseline, but you want to be safe because you know he can't keep making those shots. He lines it, but the thing is he does, and he's going to break you if you do not play really aggressively as well from the baseline.

So there's a lot of uncertainty for the opposition, and obviously the movement is incredible. You know, you don't be 7-foot tall and move like that.

To me when I'm watching him play, those are some of the stand-outs that I see, and obviously his serve is what it is. It's a great serve.

He's got scope to even work on his game. I see little things where he can tighten. Maybe coming in a little bit more behind those big forehands. Sometimes you think he relies on hitting another big shot, but he can. That's his problem. He can hit it.

I would like to come and see him put away a volley every now and then. Once he starts putting that more and more into his game -- he did it a few times today, and it worked well. There could be more times I think he can use that aspect of his game to put more pressure on the other guys.

In saying that, I don't know what else he could have done today on that surface which does not favor him one bit. So it was really impressive, and we're really proud of him on the team.

**Q. Reilly, if you don't mind a question not about the match. I hear from Fonseca that he considers you to be one of the most fun guys on the team, most pleasant to be around. I was wondering what you think about him, his personality, his game? What were your first impressions after being with him for a few days?**

REILLY OPELKA: I think he's super intelligent, and I think that was my first impression of him. He has a very high IQ. I mean, not only in tennis. Just kind of in life.

He really thinks about before he speaks with everything. Every time he speaks, you want to hear what he has to say, because he really thinks his way through things really well, which for a really young guy is really impressive.

I mean, yeah, I think he happens to be an unbelievable talent and have a great form. He seems like your -- I

mean this as a compliment. He seems like your regular kid that just happens to be really, really good at what he does. Yeah, I really enjoy spending time with him.

We don't treat him like a rookie, because he doesn't feel like a rookie at all. He's a great player and really mature for his age. Just a really cool kid.

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