

cinch Championships

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London, England, UK

Queens Club

Neal Skupski

Michael Venus

Press Conference



SKUPSKI-VENUS/Fritz-Khachanov

4-6, 7-6, 10-8

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Congratulations today. Just how special was that for both of you to do that together today?

NEAL SKUPSKI: Yeah, for me, extremely special. As I said in the speech, I have known Mike for a long time, going to the same university in America together.

Yeah, the opportunity arose to play on the grass courts together over the four, five weeks. Yeah, it's great for our confidence moving forward for Eastbourne and then Wimbledon.

Yeah, it's very special to win on home soil as well at the Queen's Club. Yeah, it's the first time I have made the final and now winning it. Yeah, I was looking, every time you walk up the steps of the locker room, you see all the champions' names on the board, like every morning I have been looking at it thinking, yeah, hopefully it can be us. Now when we come back next year it will be there.

It's very special, puts our name in history. Yeah, very happy with this week and how it went.

Q. Just on the names on the board, you're the first Brit to capture this title since Andy. That must make you feel pretty special to you on the grass as well.

NEAL SKUPSKI: Yeah, I mean, I think there is not many Brits on the board in recent years. I saw Andy's name. I think maybe Jeremy Bates is in there? Did Jamie win it?

MICHAEL VENUS: Did Joe and Rajeev win it?

NEAL SKUPSKI: No. They lost to Andy in the final. I think Lloyd lost it in the final too. Mekic/Pavic.

Yeah, it's nice to obviously put a Brit's name on the board. Yeah, it's very special. Hopefully we can do some damage in the next couple weeks.

Q. It was a match tiebreak today. How integral was that match against Joe and Rajeev?

MICHAEL VENUS: Yeah, I think every match, especially with the doubles scoring format, if you're not switched on for a couple minutes, it can change very quickly. Those match tiebreaks, you know, one or two shots can make a huge difference.

Yeah, I mean, before today, we managed to get through other matches in straight sets, had won three tiebreakers in the previous three matches. Won another tiebreaker today and then the super-tiebreak.

Yeah, I mean, for us, you know, last week we lost first round and we learned a lot from it and got back on the court and worked on things. It was great to see the things we spoke about and we wanted to implement as a team, that we did those and we trusted those in those big moments. I think some of that belief in each other in those moments, that helped, you know, turn some of those points for us.

Q. And you will want to use this to lay those foundations for Wimbledon, I assume. Neal, you spoke about how you have had a pretty turbulent year. How does it feel to have found your match in Michael?

NEAL SKUPSKI: Yeah, I mean, as I said, it's only for, have only arranged to play the grass court season together, but I always knew that a player like Mike would have my back. Also, I know him so well, I know his game, his strengths and weaknesses. We were able to work on things.

It's nice that Mike kind of moved to the deuce side, he normally plays on the ad side. Mike is a great tennis player, used to play many singles a few years ago, so I knew he could definitely transfer over to the deuce side.

Yeah, with someone like Mike, I can be very open rather than hold things back in new partnerships. My brother coaches me. He knows Mike very well. Louis Cayer used to work with Mike in the past, obviously playing with Jamie Murray. It was a no-brainer for me to obviously partner up with Mike. Yeah, it's just so nice to be confident on the court again.



Yeah, hopefully we can keep it going, keep building, and keep learning over the next couple weeks.

Q. What has your brother said to you after that match?

NEAL SKUPSKI: No, he's just very happy for me, the team, as well. We have put a lot of hard work in together all this year, and it hasn't clicked. I feel like I have been playing well. So to kind of get over the line, I have won matches this year, made finals, but never really got over the line to win, to get big points.

So this is great, 500 points for my ranking going forward, because it's quite a few ranking points to defend in a couple weeks' time.

Q. Why are you so good on grass?

NEAL SKUPSKI: I honestly don't know (smiling). Well, I grew up playing Palmerston Tennis Club on artificial grass, so that may be the reason why.

I kind of use that facility when I'm home all the time. That's maybe the reason why I struggle on clay sometimes, because I'm always practicing on artificial grass.

Yeah, I really enjoy it. I played on it when I was a kid, County Week down in Eastbourne. Yeah, just seems like when the grass court comes around, all the Brits seem to do well. It kind of gets that winning fever. Everyone wants to back the Brits.

Yeah, it's going well for me. I take a lot of confidence, kind of my game style works on grass. Yeah, I don't know the full reason why, but it's a good surface for me.

Q. It's a new partnership, but obviously memories of last year's title at Wimbledon, do they come to the fore when you head into Wimbledon? I know you have Eastbourne first, but will you go to SW19?

NEAL SKUPSKI: Yeah, I'm a member at Wimbledon. I've been going back this past week for basically breakfast in the morning, have had a massive routine, breakfast in the morning, going there for dinner. Yeah, it's nice to kind of walk into the club, see your name on the board, kind of take that memory.

So maybe that's the reason why I have played well this week, kind of have a feeling of Wimbledon again, how I was playing then.

But, yeah, looking forward to get on the grass with Mike at Wimbledon. For me, Mike's a great tennis player, has done well at Wimbledon before, made the final with Raven.

Yeah, our game styles work well together. We get along together. Yeah, we want to give it a really good go. Obviously it will be one match at a time and try and get into the second week and anything is possible. There is a lot of good teams playing well at the moment.

So, yeah, looking forward to getting out there, competing, taking one match at a time.

Q. What breakfast do you have that compels you to go to Wimbledon? Are you a full-English man, presumably?

NEAL SKUPSKI: No, same thing every day: Plain porridge and scrambled eggs on toast. That's it.

Q. Because you're lazy or because it's very good there? You don't make it yourself at home?

NEAL SKUPSKI: Well, I was in an Airbnb. I've been going with my brother. Basically go in the morning, same routine, pick up a coffee, go to Wimbledon, have the breakfast, and then we play three frames of snooker downstairs before getting the car in around 10:00.

Q. What's your highest break in snooker?

NEAL SKUPSKI: We don't need to talk about that (smiling). All it is, I am 6-5 up against Ken in frames so far this week, and I think there is a snooker table at the hotel we're staying in next week at Eastbourne.

Q. On the Olympics, you and Joe together? That's a combination that could really do well, couldn't it?

NEAL SKUPSKI: Yeah, hopefully. We have played together in the past. We played Madrid this year to hopefully play the Olympics.

We won a round and lost a tight one to Pavlasek/Behar. Very happy to be playing with Joe. I think we can do well. You never know. Obviously with the draw comes that you could play Nadal/Alcaraz, and it would be a tough first round. But we'll back ourselves and try and go out there and try and get a medal.

We will probably play two weeks before, either Hamburg or Bastad, to try and get some matches in together. Then we'll go to Paris early, do a training week there, obviously with Team GB. Yeah, hopefully we're ready to compete and go far.

Q. Is it an open draw? Could you play anyone in that draw in mixed doubles? Is there a seeding?

NEAL SKUPSKI: There are seedings. I think singles guys...

MICHAEL VENUS: It's not done on doubles, though.

NEAL SKUPSKI: No, singles guys will be seeded. Obviously Nadal won't have a ranking. He used his protected ranking to get in, I think.

There will be a floater in the draw. I think me and Joe we will be seeded, I think. But, yeah, normally in doubles events it's doubles-doubles ranking that gets seeded, but with the Olympics it could be singles-singles, so you could have someone like -- who is a good singles team?

MICHAEL VENUS: Say, Tommy Paul and Taylor Fritz. I don't know if they're going, but...

NEAL SKUPSKI: Or a singles-double team, Hurkacz-Zielinski, they will be seeded. We'll just have to wait and see.

Q. Andy Murray is hopeful at playing Wimbledon. He hasn't pulled out of the draw. He's had a back operation to remove a cyst. Wonder if you guys have ever had something similar to that? Back problems as a tennis player. How difficult that is -- I appreciate you don't know his full diagnosis, but just in terms of generally speaking of back problems in tennis.

NEAL SKUPSKI: Yeah, I mean, I think the whole of British tennis, whole of the world want to see Andy playing Wimbledon, but obviously it's up to him. We don't know kind of what he's done with his, what he's had, what procedure he's had.

For me, I have never really had a back injury. I have had stiff backs in the past. I think all tennis players get that. But didn't look like, from what we saw, it was more serious when Andy was on the court the other day against Jordan Thompson.

So I don't really want to comment and speculate what's happening with Andy, but I'm sure he will make the best decision possible for him, and I'm sure he's got a great team around him to make the right decision.

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