

**November 30, 2007**



**J. BLAKE**/M. Youzhny

6-3, 7-6, 6-7, 7-6

USA - 2

Russia – 0

An interview with:

## **CAPTAIN PATRICK McENROE and JAMES BLAKE**

THE MODERATOR: We'll have questions for either Patrick or James.

**Q. Where did you get the reserves of willpower and nerve after you'd blown it at 5-4 to come back and do it finally?**

JAMES BLAKE: Well, a lot of tennis matches in my life. Crazy things have happened, you know, since I've been playing tennis in tournaments at 12 years old.

I firmly believe now that everything happens for a reason. I think I went out there in Sweden and played a little too tentative and learned my lesson. I've been through a lot of Davis Cup matches now and never been in a final before, but I think the matches this year prepared me well to know that I'm just going to go out and be aggressive and play that style.

It was a style that lost me that game at 5-4, but it was a style that got me the win. And that's my best chance to win these matches. If I would have gone out and played this match soft, a little tentative, playing not to lose, I would have been sitting here a loser, that's for sure.

So I know I had to play that way. There was a chance I was still going to lose, but I had to go out and give myself the best opportunity. That's

what I did. Whatever the situation, if I'm up 5-4, down 5-4. He did the same thing in the third set where he served for it and lost it and played kind of a bad game and gave me a chance.

Then he played great in the tiebreaker. We both added a little drama there. I just really think it's a lot of experience. A lot of matches that have taken place, so it makes it so I can keep a little more of an even keel no matter what the situation.

**Q. Can you talk about Youzhny, how you sized him up?**

JAMES BLAKE: He's a great player on any surface. I think mainly because he stands so close to the baseline, has unbelievable timing, and can pick balls pretty clean. No matter how you hit it the pace doesn't seem to bother him that much. You really have to win points. You can't just kind of stay in or he's going to take the time away from you right on the baseline and put it by you.

I was able to get in quite a bit, which was a good feeling 'cause I knew if I was pushing for it and pushing for it and getting in to the net that I was playing some good tennis, and that's the way I was doing it today.

**Q. I think you said on TV after the match that you wanted to show the fans you were mentally tough enough to play in a Davis Cup final. Can you talk more about that.**

JAMES BLAKE: Sure. Well, I think a few articles have been written, a few people have talked about whether or not I was going to be able to come through in live rubbers. I only won one before this year.

I didn't think about that as much as you guys did. I thought about the fact that our team was in the finals, and that's what I was focusing on. I tend to focus a little more on the positive than it seems the media does.

But I wanted to show people that I was here to play my best tennis. And whether or not that was a loss, I easily could have lost this match,

but I wanted to play my best and be strong enough mentally and not have these people make kind of ridiculous questions about whether a top 10 player or a singles player on a Davis Cup finals team is mentally tough or not, because you don't get here without being mentally tough.

You know, obviously there are guys that are mentally tougher than some others, but that's comparing the .001 percent to the other .0001 percent that might be better than them. It's not easy out there. I wanted to prove that I was tough enough to hang in a tough situation, in a big match, in a final that I've never even been in before.

It made a big difference to have the confidence of my teammates and my captain and my family here.

**Q. Patrick, you're in a pretty good place now. Talk about your emotions after the first two matches.**

CAPTAIN McENROE: Well, we feel good, obviously. I mean, I just couldn't be happier with James' performance. You know, not really even the way he played, just the way he handled the whole situation. I mean, Youzhny played great. It was a hell of a match from both guys.

James, he just was positive throughout. He kept going for his shots. You know, as he already talked about, I mean, to lose when you're trying to serve for the match happens. But the key to me was how James kept coming back, you know. He was up a break I think in the second set as well, and it went to the tiebreak there. He just dealt with, you know, adversity really, really well in this match.

I just thought it was, you know, one of his best performances ever. I mean, forget about Davis Cup. I mean, he's had some great, big matches, but I thought this has got to be right up there.

**Q. James, it's one thing to feel like you want to prove us wrong or any kind of critics, but what about your teammates? How important was it for you to prove that you could be an equal contributor in this final?**

JAMES BLAKE: Well, they've believed in me the whole year, so I wanted to prove them right, to be honest. They've had a lot of confidence in me every time.

I think a lot of people talked about the highs after a win in Davis Cup are a bit higher and

the lows are a bit lower. It means a lot after some lows of losing tough matches to have your teammates pick you up. That's what these guys have done for me any time I have had that situation where I'm a little down on myself. They pick me up right away and get me ready. If I'm needed on Sunday, I'll be ready. I'll be back to being confident. These guys have done a great job all year.

Now it's one of the highs. I hope we stay on a high and keep, you know, by the end of the weekend we're celebrating. But it's a great feeling to have the confidence of your teammates. And it's just -- I really don't know how to describe this feeling of a team that you really care about, that you know so well, that you've been through seven years of ups and downs. Just a ton of fun, a ton of laughs.

But, like I said, the lows being lower. We've had some tough times. We've had so much fun. We need to get one more. We'll be so proud of the journey we took.

**Q. James, can you share with us what Coach McEnroe said to you before you went out for that last service game?**

JAMES BLAKE: Before the last service game? What did you say to me? Probably, Keep positive.

CAPTAIN McENROE: Last service game? Which one? The one where you lost serve (smiling)? That one?

JAMES BLAKE: No, 5-6 I held. I think most of the time he was just telling me to stay positive, keep going for my shots, which is a good feeling 'cause, you know, you come back to the sideline after getting broken or something and you might see some guys' heads hanging a little lower, some shoulders slumped.

I didn't see that. Every time I came over I saw Patrick with a fist pump saying, Keep doing what you're doing. That's the best feeling. That's the confidence I talked about that my teammates have, that if I play my game I'm going to give myself the best chance to win. So he just said, Keep doing what you're doing.

**Q. We've seen Andy time and time again step up and close out these important ties. How do you think the Bryan brothers are going to take to that tomorrow?**

CAPTAIN McENROE: I'm not sure they're

going to be able to sleep tonight. I've already been texting them. They're pretty pumped up I mean, to put it mildly. You know, obviously they get pumped up for breakfast, so...

You know, they've been in 0-2 situations, 1-1. They actually haven't been in that many 2-0 situations. I think maybe only twice before. Once this year against Spain.

So, you know, it's always been great to have Andy there at 2-1 on the last day, but I think it might even be better to have the Bryans there at 2-Zip.

**Q. Frankly, I'm more concerned about Wayne.**

JAMES BLAKE: He'll be out of the state.

CAPTAIN McENROE: He won't be allowed in the stadium by the boys.

JAMES BLAKE: I said it on the court. I played them a few weeks ago, and I'm going to have a whole lot more fun watching them than playing them because they make it very difficult on anyone, whether it's singles players, doubles players.

I mean, there is a very good reason why they're the No. 1 doubles team in the world. They've proven it time and time again. They've proven it in Davis Cup. Like he said, they get so amped up. If they get a lead it is so tough to come back with how excited they are, how much they're moving, how much they force you to beat them. They just come up with unbelievable shots.

We have so much fun watching them because we're constantly in awe of how good their hands are, how well they move together, how great Mike's returning, how close Bob gets to the net, how well they're doing everything.

I mean, it shows that they've been playing doubles together since they were little kids and that they have confidence in each other. They pick each other up. It's just like a little model of our team, the fact that those guys pick each other up so much.

They're literal family, but we all feel we're a bigger family and we're trying to pick each other up no matter what the situation.

**Q. Two-part question: Specifically, do you think this is the biggest win of your career? Billie Jean King said this was a life-changing match for you. Can you reflect on how this might impact your career.**

JAMES BLAKE: Well, yeah, I got to say this is probably my biggest win. No, I'm not going to say probably, I'm going to say this is the biggest win of my career. Before this I would say it was my first Davis Cup win.

Just to have that feeling, especially the situation it was in after 9/11 against a veteran like Leander Paes, it was just a feeling that was almost indescribable. Today to do it in a final, to play, as Patrick said, one of my best matches in my first-ever Davis Cup final against a player like Youzhny, who is playing very good tennis, can play great on any surface, at home with this many people, it's definitely my best performance.

As far as life-changing, I think I would say career-changing. It's tough for me to say life-changing when there are other things out there. But the reason it could possibly be is because my mom was here, my brother was here, and I got to share it with them. Those are the things that changed my life, is being able to share those memories with my family, with my friends, with my teammates. That could make it a life-changing experience, because this is a memory I'll never forget.

But in terms of my tennis, is this going to make me a better player next year? I don't know. Like I said before, all things happen for a reason. I got better in Sweden when I lost. I got better from having a win against Tommy Robredo in Spain. I think I'm going to get better from this, but this match won't mean anything on Sunday. Once we get out there, if I'm playing again in a meaningful match, I can't think just because I played well today I'm going to play well on Sunday. I got to go out there and prepare the same way and be ready to perform the same way.

**Q. Patrick, you look more tired than James. Talk about the whole experience of being a captain, sitting through these two very emotional matches. What goes on in you during that time?**

CAPTAIN McENROE: Well, a lot of things. But it's pretty awesome. It's a privilege, first of all, to be the captain. I felt that way for seven years. And to be with these guys just makes it that much more special. I mean, like James said, we've all been through, you know, a lot of matches, a lot of plane rides, a lot of hotels, a lot of experiences together.

To see Andy come out and to know how

much it means to him to be in a final, and to perform as he did and sort of keep his emotions in check throughout the whole match and really just focus on what he needs to do.

And then to see James come up and play a much tougher match as far as the score and mentally to just handle it so well, you know, I couldn't be prouder of the guys.

But obviously you go through the ups and downs. You know, you follow every point like you're playing it. And thankfully I'm not playing it. But you certainly follow it in that way. But always try to keep the guys pumped up and keep them positive and sometimes say nothing. Today it worked, but it doesn't always work.

**Q. Patrick, you were pretty vocal about your concerns on the unlimited challenge system. Could you speak to it, how you thought it worked. Were you thinking about it differently?**

CAPTAIN McENROE: I still don't like it. But obviously with it as a rule, I mean, you have to use it. James looked over at me, Do you think you should challenge? Why not?

I don't like it, but it certainly didn't have an effect on the match, I thought. There was one weird time where I think you challenged on his serve, hit a winner, then he got a first serve. Just stuff like that seems kind of ludicrous, to be honest.

I think it's a little much.

JAMES BLAKE: Yeah, I don't think it affected the outcome of the match really. I think maybe only two calls were overruled, maybe three. But I think quite a few of them, I mean, there were definitely a few times where I was pretty sure it was in. I might as well challenge.

I wouldn't have done that 'cause, you know, I can look over at the sideline and I see the guys say, No, it was in; just move on. But if there's unlimited challenges like that you're going to do that. It maybe takes a little extra time, could take you out of the rhythm.

I think we should be maybe more strict about it and go back to three or two. I hope we have good enough eyes to be confident in our abilities to see those.

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