

Porsche Team Germany to also play in the World Group containing the world's top tennis nations in 2023

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12/11/2022 The reshaped Porsche Team Germany has passed its first major test with flying colours and will now also be competing for the Billie Jean King Cup together with the top tennis nations next year. In the play-offs for a place in the World Group of the most important team competition in women's tennis, national coach Rainer Schüttler's team defeated the favourites Croatia 3-1 in Rijeka.

Play-Offs, day 2

In the electric atmosphere in the Sportska Dvorana Zamet with brass band music and drumming, newcomer Eva Lys, Jule Niemeier and Anna-Lena Friedsam won the points for Porsche Team Germany

on their Billie Jean King Cup singles debuts. The play-offs in Rijeka, where a place next year in the attractive World Group containing the world's top nations was at stake, marked the first appearance of the reshaped team after Andrea Petkovic's retirement and Angelique Kerber's pregnancy.

"The girls were brilliant, I'm so unbelievably proud of the whole team," said Rainer Schüttler. "We knew just how strong the Croatians were at home. Therefore, it was important to express our commitment for our players going into the difficult task. The way that they repaid it on the court was sensational and makes me very confident for the future."

After the first day on the Croatian Adriatic coast, the score was level at one rubber each. Jule Niemeier therefore was under a lot of pressure in the first match of the day. The Porsche Team Germany No. 1 for the first time, it was vital that she, after losing her opening match against Petra Marcinko, kept the team on track to win the tie. And the Wimbledon quarterfinalist fulfilled all the expectations against Ana Konjuh. Visibly more confident and in better form than on day one, she won in two straight sets 6-2, 6-1. "I managed to concentrate fully on my own game," she said. "It was the main reason why I was able to pull out my A-game."

Instead of the originally planned Eva Lys, who put Porsche Team Germany in the lead on Friday with an easy win against the Croatian No. 1 Petra Martic, Rainer Schüttler selected Anna-Lena Friedsam for the fourth play-off rubber. "Our commitment for Eva on the first day is the same as for Anna-Lena," he said when speaking about his decision. "Both are in good form and have practiced well, but we feel it's the better tactical variation." His thoughts were spot on. Anna-Lena Friedsam transferred the good form she enjoyed recently when reaching the final at the WTA-125 tournament in Midland, USA to the Centre Court in the Sportska Dvorana Zamet in Rijeka. She won 6-4, 6-1 against Petra Marcinko and duly clinched victory for Porsche Team Germany.

"I found out I would be playing on Saturday when eating dinner in the evening. I was naturally delighted and am now very proud that I played so well," said Anna-Lena Friedsam. And Eva Lys was overjoyed after her successful Porsche Team Germany debut: "The match went really well. I wasn't surprised because I know how well I can play. The team gave me a lot of energy and it was incredible winning the first point for Germany in my very first rubber in the Billie Jean King Cup. I've never experienced anything like it on court."

After Porsche Team Germany had put themselves into an unassailable lead, the final doubles for which Laura Siegemund was nominated was not played.

Play-Offs, day 1

Good start for Porsche Team Germany in the Billie Jean King Cup play-offs: with the score at one rubber each after the first day against Croatia, the team is still in with a good chance of remaining in the World Group. First match – first major surprise: Eva Lys, who is still a Porsche Talent Team member, celebrated a magnificent Porsche Team Germany debut on the opening day of the play-offs in Rijeka.

The 20-year-old right-hander, currently the world No. 123, was in brilliant form and fully confident right from the start of her match against Petra Martic. She eventually ran out an impressive 6-1, 6-4 winner against the Croatian No. 1 who is ranked 84 places above her.

Jule Niemeier was not able to take advantage of her teammate's excellent performance in the second match of the day. The Wimbledon quarterfinalist was defeated 6-3, 6-2 by the 16-year-old world No. 194, Petra Marcinko. She had replaced the injured Donna Vekic at the last moment.

Jule Niemeier will face Petra Martic in the first rubber of the day on Saturday at 2.00 pm CET. It will be followed by the match between Eva Lys and Petra Marcinko. Should a deciding doubles be necessary, Porsche Team Germany will be represented by Anna-Lena Friedsam and Laura Siegemund.

Preview

Porsche Team Germany will face a strong Croatian team in the Billie Jean King Cup tie in Rijeka from 11 to 12 November – and will be looking to spring a surprise against the hosts who go into the match as favourites. There is a lot at stake for Porsche Team Germany in the Sportska Dvorana Zamet in Rijeka. For the players captained by national coach Rainer Schüttler, the focus at the play-off will be on remaining in the Billie Jean King Cup World Group, the most important team event in women's tennis. In his mind, the Croatians are the favourites, but his players have impressed him with their performances this week on the practice court so that he is confident ahead of the match: "We've got a compact team and could cause and upset," he says. "The players are definitely up for it."

After Andrea Petkovic's retirement and Angelique Kerber's pregnancy, responsibilities within Porsche Team Germany now lie on new shoulders especially as the Wimbledon semi-finalist Tatjana Maria has had to pull out injured. It means Jule Niemeier will lead the team in the important encounter as the No. 1 for the first time. She will be backed up by Laura Siegemund, Anna-Lena Friedsam and Eva Lys.

"I'm obviously very proud to lead our team as the No. 1 and I associate it with positive feelings and no pressure," says Jule Niemeier. The Porsche Talent Team player caused a stir this year with impressive Grand Slam performances when reaching the quarterfinals at Wimbledon and the last 16 at the US Open. Rainer Schüttler is highly confident the 23-year-old German will go a long way in tennis. "Jule has played extremely well the whole year. She's on the up and has already proved she can beat every opponent," he says. "I feel she can handle pressure really well. She's turned in some great matches after breaking through and now wants to also prove herself on the big stage."

Anna-Lena Friedsam and Eva Lys have also travelled to the Croatian seaport high on confidence. Last week, Anna-Lena Friedsam was the runner-up at the Dow Tennis Classic, a WTA125 tournament in Midland, USA. In October, the Porsche Talent Team's Eva Lys first won the ITF W60 tournament in Trnava, Slovakia and then went on to reach the final of the W100 event on the ITF World Tour in Shrewsbury, England. She is now making her Billie Jean Cup debut.

"Eva is currently playing extremely well and is knocking on the door of the Top 100," says Rainer Schüttler. "She's therefore earned the right to be a part of the team. She's even got the chance of actually playing." And Laura Siegemund, the winner of the 2017 Porsche Tennis Grand Prix and the 2020 US Open doubles champion? "You can always rely on her to come up with the goods," continued the national coach. "She's an old hand and is very experienced."

Petra Martic is Croatia's No. 1. She is currently world ranked No. 39 and therefore 22 places to the good of Jule Niemeier (No. 61). The hosts are also ahead when it comes to the No. 2s as Donna Vekic is No. 69 in the WTA world rankings – Anna-Lena Friedsam in No. 111. But Jule Niemeier is convinced world rankings are not everything. "It's not going to be easy for us," she says, "but I'm sure we've got a good chance to return home as winners."

In the opening match on Friday, newcomer Eva Lys will play Petra Martic at 4 pm. They will be followed by Jule Niemeier against Donna Vekic. The rubbers between Jule Niemeier and Petra Martic and Eva Lys versus Donna Vekic are scheduled for Saturday from 2 pm onwards. Rainer Schüttler has nominated Anna-Lena Friedsam and Laura Siegemund for the doubles.

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