

Great anticipation

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07/11/2014 Barbara Rittner and Anke Huber talk about the Porsche Team Germany, which is playing against the Czech Republic in the Fed Cup final on November 8th and 9th.

Barbara Rittner and Anke Huber were members of the last German team to claim the Fed Cup 22 years ago. Anke Huber is now the Operating Tournament Director of the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix and Barbara Rittner is the captain of Porsche Team Germany which will be attempting to win back the Fed Cup title for Germany in the final against the Czech Republic in Prague over the weekend. They jointly talked about their memories of 1992 and the chances for 2014 when interviewed recently.

What memories do you have of winning the Fed Cup in 1992 when you, together with Steffi Graf, beat Spain in Frankfurt?

Barbara Rittner: "Winning the title at home in a team with Steffi and Anke was something special but I do feel we could have celebrated a bit more intensively. What do you think Anke?"

Anke Huber:"Partywise, we weren't quite in the same class as your girls. But I was only 17 at the time. For me it was a big experience to play for Germany and to win the title."

Back then, people thought you only had an outside chance of winning. How do you see the chances for Prague?

Barbara Rittner: "I see us as being the outsiders again. The Czech team is incredibly strong and play consistently at the highest level. They recently won the Fed Cup in 2011 and 2012. It says a lot about the strength of their team."

Anke Huber: "I also feel the hosts will go into the finals as favourites. But I think our girls definitely have the games to match the Czechs and in the end it will depend on who plays better on the day. The question is also how will the Czechs deal with the pressure of playing in front of their home crowd? Playing at home is not always automatically an advantage."

Were you so closely knit in 1992 as the current Porsche Team Germany?

Anke Huber:"In our day, it wasn't possible to develop such a team spirit. Back then the Fed Cup was played over a week at a single venue. It meant the team was only together for two weeks in a year – one week preparing and one week competing."

Barbara Rittner: "Today's players have known each since their juniors days and have spent far more time together at training camps and tournaments than we ever did. Anke and I grew up together. Steffi on the other hand was a little older than us, so we didn't do things together as juniors."

Anke Huber:"On top of that Steffi mainly practiced alone and was also more of a loner."

Barbara Rittner: "...who was also a fantastic team member."

Anke Huber:"Definitely. When we were on court, we always did things as a team and cheered and supported each other."

Was the importance of women's tennis and the Fed Cup back then as big as it is these days?

Barbara Rittner:"They were different times. As a result of the many successes of Steffi and Anke and naturally Boris Becker and Michael Stich, tennis was on everybody's lips. Tennis was televised almost every day on TV. It meant that the importance of the Fed Cup was also automatically high even though we didn't get quite the attention as they do today."

Anke Huber: "The Fed Cup has become far more important since then and is in the limelight far more. I have the impression that the players' attitudes have changed over the years. It's obvious for all to see that they love representing their country as a team and being successful together. Porsche Team Germany is the best example of that."

How important was the Fed Cup win in 1992 for you as players? Barbara, how are you feeling 22 years later with the chance of capturing the title as the team captain?

Anke Huber: "As I said previously, I was 17 at the time and probably wasn't really able to fully realize the importance of the success. Looking back, I have to say that the Fed Cup title was something quite special and an important milestone in my career."

Barbara Rittner: "The title was very important for my career at the time and not just when looking back. After all I was a member of the world's best tennis team – it was something quite special. That I now have the chance to win the title as the team captain makes me proud and shows me that my work is bearing fruit."

There are only a few days to go to the final. To what extent is the tension increasing?

Barbara Rittner:"I'm slowly getting nervous. When falling asleep at night, I daren't think about the final too much otherwise I'd get too uptight which wouldn't be good. But the great anticipation ahead of the final outweighs everything."

Which strengths of the Porsche Team Germany players are you putting your faith in most of all against the strong Czechs?

Barbara Rittner: "I'm putting my faith above all in the performances that my players have already served

up in the Fed Cup. And naturally our team spirit. It can move mountains."

Anke Huber: "I believe we can win. One shouldn't however forget that getting to the final alone is a great success for Porsche Team Germany in itself. And the girls can crown it all by winning the title. The interest in German women's tennis hasn't been as big as it is now for a long time. A win in Prague would further increase people's awareness and would also be a big incentive and enormous motivation for younger players like those in the Porsche Talent Team Germany.

What does Porsche Team Germany have to do to win the title?

Anke Huber: "On the day everything has to be perfect. No matter what happened before – the players have to switch on and be prepared for everything. Only then can they be successful against such strong opponents."

Barbara Rittner: "The players have to feel they're well-prepared, also in respect of the electric atmosphere in the hall, so that they to call upon their best tennis. We have to do everything to enjoy the weekend despite the stress and tension. Then everything is possible."

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