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The “Italian Job” of Cassetta and Di Giovanni: “Playing in a World Championship is a childhood dream, each match is a wonderful adventure”

“Chills”. “Indescribable”. These could be song titles, but instead, they’re the intentionally brief responses of **Marco Cassetta** and **Lorenzo Di Giovanni**. How would you explain to someone who knows nothing about padel or sports what it feels like to wear the national jersey? Ask any athlete from the 32 nations participating in the **FIP World Padel Championships** in **Doha**, and the answer would be almost the same. **Marco Cassetta** and **Lorenzo Di Giovanni**, key players on the Italian team, take their time finding the right words, saying together, *“If it’s something indescribable, how are we supposed to describe it?”* True enough. But they feel the weight of representing a country, Italy, which ranks second worldwide for the number of players and courts. So they know they are role models, especially in a year when TV broadcasts for the World Championship have grown exponentially, thanks to platforms like **Red Bull TV**, channels like **Supertennis**, and **FIP** streaming. Their screen audience has grown enormously. *“Of course we think about this when we step onto the court,”* Di Giovanni explains, *“and knowing there are so many people watching us pushes you to play better; it electrifies you when you grip the paddle and look at your opponent”*. *“Even if they aren’t there in the stands, it feels like we can see them cheering for us. What more could you ask for?”* adds Cassetta. For both players, the World Championship atmosphere is *“perfect. Everything here is beautiful, organized down to the last detail, and wearing the national jersey can’t be compared to any other tournament in the world. Here, we’re Italy, and we know every player from the other teams feels the same way. A World Championship is magical, a great exchange of social and athletic experiences. Emotion? I’d say the thrill of being part of an unrepeatable event. Every time you step onto the court in a World Championship, it feels like the first time, a wonderful adventure”*.

The two Italians continue to describe their feelings: *“We realize that so many people are cheering for us from all the encouragement, questions, and virtual support we see on social media. It’s incredible”*. Do they reply to those who write to them on social media? The answer is a double smash: *“Always”*.

The Azzurri debuted against **Argentina**, no easy challenge. The world champions won, but the Italians gave them a real match. *“You don’t get the chance every day to go up against **Tapia** and **Chingotto**,”* Di Giovanni says, *“and it was amazing to play in a match like that. When we*

*talk about the magic of the World Championship, that's what we mean. **Aris Patiniotis** and I lost with honor and played well; and I can tell you that even players like them, when they wear their national jersey, are different. I don't know how to explain it, but maybe it's that sense of responsibility that comes from representing your country". Cassetta also faced two top-level opponents: **Augsburger** and **Di Nenno**. "It's not every day you meet players at this level on the circuit", he smiles, "and when it happens with the national jersey, everything is more beautiful and has more meaning. These are the matches you dream of as a child, and we're playing them in the blue jersey – what more could you want?"*

The conversation with the two Azzurri touches on locker-room stories, the kind told with a smile. This is a quality that **Marcela Ferrari's** players never lose. "Who's the biggest talker? Easy answer, **Giulio Graziotti**, but I assure you that **Simone Cremona**, with his princely manners, talks a lot, too", reveals Cassetta. When it comes to who's the most optimistic before a tough match, the 'Azzurro' explains, "No one in particular; we're a close-knit group, each competing to be the most optimistic". The final question: what's the first thing they'll tell their loved ones when they get home? "We hope it's something great that hasn't happened yet..." Game, set, match.

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