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Sony Ericsson Open

F. VERDASCO/B. Becker

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An interview with:

FERNANDO VERDASCO

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How has your life changed since you helped to win the Davis Cup and played this great match at the Australian Open? Has your life changed?

FERNANDO VERDASCO: A little bit. No, the truth is it changed a lot after Davis Cup and also the Australian Open. It was a big change for me. You know, to be of course in the top 10 for first time after Australia, it was one of my biggest goals.

I was so happy, you know, taking that goal, and also, you know, everything. Everything is much better than before, no? You know, when you make your work good and everybody come to you and say that you are making a great job, makes you feel happy and much better, no?

Q. Are you more popular in Spain now, like people approach you on the street everywhere?

FERNANDO VERDASCO: I just been three days in Spain after Australia, because after that I went to Las Vegas for practice another month with Gil Reyes and all the team.

You know, I didn't have to much time to see about this, no? But it's one thing that also is not important for me, no? For me, the most important thing is to play good, to keep playing like this, and to win all the matches I can, no? I think that is important for me.

The other thing is if the people recognize me more or not, it's one thing that is not the most important thing right now.

Q. How did you think you played today?

FERNANDO VERDASCO: It was tough conditions. It's windy. And also, you never know, you know, because sometimes I was looking the palms to see where the wind was.

After one ball, I miss one ball long thinking that the wind was coming against me, and then the palms are looking the other way again. So it was changing a lot.

Like this is tough, no, to play? It's really tough. You make more mistakes than usual. But, you know, at least I won. It's important also to win not playing the best tennis, no?

But also, the other guy, for him it was also tough. It's tough for all the players to play like that. I'm happy that I, you know, took that challenge and I was able to win with these tough conditions.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about your decision to go to Vegas and work out with Andre and Gil and Darren and how that has helped you?

FERNANDO VERDASCO: A lot. I just spoke a lot about this. After Australia, after Indian Wells, during Indian Wells, that Gil Reyes, Darren Cahill, Andre Agassi, all the people that I was in Las Vegas practicing with helped me a lot. I was practicing so hard with Gil in December, also now in February.

But now in February it was a little bit different, because after Australia I was, with my injury in the ankle, I didn't practice that hard or all the things that I was practicing in December. It was a little bit different, but also very tough.

They help me a lot. You know, Agassi, like I said too many times already, was my idol when I was young. I was watching all the time his matches.

Now, you have your idol telling you what to do, you know, telling you what he thinks is better for you, what is not better for you, you know, helps you a lot.

I think that it's one of the best decision I ever had, to go to Vegas and to be with all these unbelievable persons helping me.

Q. Is this informal? Is it a paid thing? Like is Darren going to be your coach at all, or is it part-time?

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FERNANDO VERDASCO: No, he just help. They don't want to travel so much. Darren Cahill was in Indian Wells, Darren and Gil. They're working for adidas also, for the program of adidas.

Not only me. You know, a lot of top players was there in February. You know, I was a player that I had been more time there, but I'm not the only one.

You know, it's just help of them, telling me the things I should do and the things I don't needed to or what they think about me. You know, there is a lot of help for me, because they had a lot of experience. That's so important, no? Help me a lot.

Q. Seems to be working. You're playing at a really intense level. Looks like you're on a mission. At 25 years old -- you're now in the top 10. What more do you hope to accomplish?

FERNANDO VERDASCO: You know, I think that everybody is different. Now, for me, with 25 years old, it was my time to be top 10 for first time.

Another people, another persons with 18, another one with 23, you know, everybody is different. Everybody mature before another one later. For me, after Davis Cup, that was a big change for me mentally. That gave me a lot of confidence and motivation to be, you know, in the top and to try to be better.

All this motivation and confidence that I had in that tie and after that tie made me took the decision to go to Las Vegas, also, and to be out of home in Christmas, in New Year's without my family, just with my dad in Las Vegas.

It was really hard for me for one side because I'm so -- a person so familiar. I love to be with my family in Christmas and New Year's. All the last years I didn't play the first week of the year, because if I play these tournaments in Chennai or Adelaide or all these tournaments, I cannot be New Year's at home. That's, for me, pretty tough.

I think that last year was my time to take that decision and, you know, not to be with my family, but just do what I need to do, what I think that is better for me to be better.

You know, I'm happy that I start the season that good, playing that good. I hope to be playing like this the much time as possible.

Q. Is it important for to you continue to rise up through the rankings? Do you see yourself being No. 1?

FERNANDO VERDASCO: No. 1 is far away right now. Rafa have a lot of points. The most important for me is to keep improving and, of course, keep going up in the ranking, no?

Right now I'm No. 9. No. 8 is like 100 points away from me. You know, I just need to go -- I don't like to think about too much, you know, or too far away. I just want to think day by day, to do the things right and try to win every match every day.

You know, all the things that need to come will come, so I don't want rush any way.

Q. Have they helped you mostly, Gil and Andre, with conditioning or technical things about your game? Seems like right now you could outlast anyone stamina-wise.

FERNANDO VERDASCO: They help me in both: physically and also technically and also telling me what I need to do, what I don't need to do against these guys. Do one thing against the other one. Do a little bit more or less or whatever. Every player is different.

You need to know how to play against one. And then another one is that they're completely different than the one before.

Yesterday I was speaking on the phone with Darren Cahill. I didn't reach Gil. But we are a lot in contact. In Indian Wells I was speaking also with Andre. So it's things that, you know, we are in contact a lot of time.

Next match I play with Feliciano, but with him maybe I don't need that much help because we know each other a lot. Many years he's my best friend on the tour. So it's going to be tough to play against him.

But against another players that I don't know that much or that I didn't see them play before so much, they help me a lot also, no? Darren, for example, he knows a lot of players and how they play and how I need to play against them.

Big help for me.

Q. Has it been tough following Rafa? I mean, you're older than him, obviously. Has it helped drive you to see what this kid has done so young and say, Hey, why not me?

FERNANDO VERDASCO: You know, he

was so good always. The best in the world under 13, under 14, under 15. He's one of millions and millions, no?

You need to see him like a mirror, like professionally, and how he is day by day. For him, it doesn't matter to be No. 1 or No. 2 or No. 3. He's giving 100% of himself. That's one thing that you need to learn from him.

But, you know, about me, I don't think that -- you know, I didn't think that he's younger than me, and if he does it, why I don't do it or whatever, no? I think that I need to do my things. Every player, like I told you before, is different.

You know, things like I just tell you, like he's so professional and how he made everything to be like this every day, this is one thing to learn from him. All the other things, everybody is different.

Q. As a left-handed player, how did you feel like to play against right-handers? Is it an advantage? You feel like that?

FERNANDO VERDASCO: No, I was playing -- normally you play 90% of the matches against right-handed, and for them, they played only 10 against lefties.

So I think there is a little bit for us advantage against them, no? Because they're not used to playing lefties, and they maybe need to change a little bit his way of play.

But then after, in the court, I don't think it's a very big difference. I think it's a little bit difference, but it's not a huge difference.

Q. When you were in Las Vegas you said that you worked on some spirituality. Describe a little bit about that.

FERNANDO VERDASCO: About what?

Q. Spirituality.

FERNANDO VERDASCO: No.

Q. Did I mishear?

FERNANDO VERDASCO: No. It was just a great time speaking a lot with Gil. He's the one I spend more time, and he's -- you know, I think, like I said many times already, he's maybe the most professional coach or person I ever met.

He have everything under control, and he made me be more professional and also have everything under more control about foods, about everything, you know, like time of play or time of practice, everything.

We were speaking also that we was practicing so hard, four hours' fitness every day, 3:00 to 4:30 every day. It was also a lot of conversations and motivation and telling me, you know, like I just told him before, all the things that I should do or what I don't -- he don't think needed to, you know, just about everything. We were speaking about, I think, all what one tennis player needs.

And also, every player, like I told you also, they're different, so I think you need to find your own way the best way for yourself. So he was trying to do that.

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