

March 29, 2009

Sony Ericsson Open

T. DENT/T. Robredo

7-5, 6-3

An interview with:

TAYLOR DENT

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How do you feel? It looks like you're maybe one game away. Federer would be your next match.

TAYLOR DENT: Well, I feel pretty good after the match today. You know, it was definitely an improvement over the Almagro match. Like I said, it was really gusty playing Almagro. It was just kind of a scrappy wind. I don't think either one of us walked off the court saying we played well.

But today came out with guns ablazing. You know, there were times when I would have liked to have executed a little bit better. But like I said, stuck to my guns and really played, you know, a decent match overall.

Q. What was exactly your injury, and when was the last surgery?

TAYLOR DENT: They called it a spondylolisthesis. That's the technical name for it, but in layman's terms, my last vertebrae, L-5 was broken on both sides. So it was a bilateral pars fracture.

The surgeries I had was basically the first one was to try and put this bone growth compound over the fractures and hope that it mends on its own. That didn't work, so basically I had a fusion. They took out the bottom half of my L-5 vertebra and put a rod in there, some cages and some screws, and fused it all up.

Q. When was that?

TAYLOR DENT: The second one was in September of '07.

Q. How long did you spend in bed?

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TAYLOR DENT: Yeah, it was close to a year, just under a year between the two surgeries. The first one I spent more time in bed, actually, because there was no, you know, kind of cast in my body. That's what the bar and the disks are, is pretty much a cast.

So I had to where a cast from my armpit down to my knee for, you know, pretty much the whole time. March was the first surgery until September.

Q. March what year?

TAYLOR DENT: March '07, yeah.

Q. This little run through South Florida seems like you got the matches you wanted, and now biggest win today, obviously. How good do you feel?

TAYLOR DENT: I feel great. For me, it's really a vindication for not only myself, but my supporting staff. For someone to come from where I've been, it would be almost impossible without the handful of people who've really been supporting me my whole way.

You know, my family goes without saying. Jenny, my wife, has been there the whole step of the way, just saying, You can do it. You can do it. And, you know, a special shout out to the people at Bollettieri's. The whole crew the IMG have really been my biggest cheering squad. So I really have to thank them to no end, and I definitely wouldn't be here without them.

Q. Your wife/coach, right?

TAYLOR DENT: That's right. She's my coach this week.

Q. When you were in the body cast, were you thinking at that point you'd be out here again maybe facing Roger Federer on center court? Did you believe that that was going to happen?

TAYLOR DENT: Well, I'm a realist in a lot of scenarios. I was told no, so I was kind of thinking about what I would do other than play tennis. You know, that involved commentating, that involved coaching, and I really loved coaching. That would be something that I'd love to pursue

T Dent - 03 29 09.doc

after my tennis career.

But playing professional tennis wasn't really -- I thought it was -- oh, you know, I wish I would have done this differently in my career; I wish I would have done that differently. But I didn't really believe I'd have an opportunity to pursue it again.

So, you know, a year later, couple years later, it's like, Wow, here I am. Now I'm applying those things that I said I wish I would have done.

Q. They said no to you, and then you start coming back. There must have been a point where you think, Well, there is a chance after all.

TAYLOR DENT: It was kind of a progression. I never really got my hopes up. After the second surgery, it was successful, and my doctor, Todd Lanman out in LA. He said, you know, It looks pretty good. You should give it a shot at least.

So I started hitting. I was riding a high when he said I should give it a shot. Then I saw my fitness and came down to a low, and then it was kind of it was a gradual process. I played a tournament in Carson and I played a tough three-set match and came out.

I lost, but I finished the match. My back was a little bit stiff, but not too bad. I'm like, Oh, let's just keep progressing and see what happens.

I didn't get my hopes up because, I don't know, I would have been devastated if I would have thought, Here I come. I'm going to come back, and then reality hit.

But, you know, it's been a dream comeback so for me. It hasn't been a perfect ride, but the fact that I'm here and still plugging away and fighting hard is a dream come true.

Q. And playing Roger on Stadium Court?

TAYLOR DENT: That's right, Roger needs his rematch from our juniors.

Q. Talk about that.

TAYLOR DENT: Well, when I was playing before, everybody asked -- when I was at Bollettieri's, everybody asked, did I play Roger? Did I play Nadal?

For all the years we were on tour together we never played a professional match. I always said I'm, yeah, I'm 1-0 in the juniors. It was a leadup tournament to Wimbledon.

Q. Do you remember the match?

TAYLOR DENT: Oh, yeah. No, I actually remember it, because I was getting a little fired up out there. I thought I got a raw deal on a call, and I let the umpire have it.

Q. Where was that?

TAYLOR DENT: That was in Rotterdam where they play the Wimbledon quallies. Roehampton, sorry. It's been a while. I've been out of it for a while. You've got to give me some slack.

Q. You're sure you're not going to play the clay court season? You want to get back in better shape?

TAYLOR DENT: It's a thought. Winning matches is great. I love winning matches, but the big goal for me is competing to win titles. For that to happen, I really feel like I need to get faster out on the tennis court. I need to get fitter on the tennis court. There are some parts of my game I need to work on and improve, and that's really impossible to do while you're playing tournaments.

So, you know, if I'm looking at the big picture, I might take these clay court weeks off and really work hard for the month, month and a half that I have.

Q. You said you're applying things now that you wished -- what are some of those?

TAYLOR DENT: Actually, it's -- well, it doesn't seem like it if you watch my play, but it's just a little bit less negative emotions out on the court, or less emotional out on the court. I try to look at it almost more businesslike.

I walk off the court and I'm saying, What shot let me down? What shot helped me win the match? Just working on it, taking it for what it is. Before I think that I would almost give myself an excuse for losing by getting so upset after a win that I wouldn't really analyze the problems.

I think if I would have done that from a younger age, I would have been a much stronger player.

Q. You mean like when you flipped the racquet the other day and hurt your hand?

TAYLOR DENT: Yeah, exactly. I get emotional out there, but it's more of -- what I'm talking about is more after the match. You know, really, once your emotions settle down, it's not really looking at the match too emotionally.

It's like, Okay, let's go shot by shot. Let's talk about what happened, what was good, what was bad, why, and stuff like that.

Q. Do you think that the fact that you're a rare breed as a serve and volleyer, do you think that's going to give you an edge when you get yourself to the fitness level you want?

TAYLOR DENT: Absolutely. I mean, I feel like serving and volleying off of first serves if you have a big serve is a huge advantage. You know, guys can't just block returns back in play. I volley well enough to back it up.

Second serve I think is a bit rough, but I had this similar question yesterday. I see, you know, these guys' games all the time. I practice with them all the time, and they don't see me. The nice thing is I feel like I can play a few different styles.

So it will be an advantage as soon as I get my consistency up there.

Q. During your TV time, did you make commentary on Roger's matches?

TAYLOR DENT: Actually, I did. At the US Open, I commentated pretty much every one of Roger's matches. You learn stuff. But at the end of the day, it all comes down to execution. It doesn't matter if you think that Federer has a weak whatever.

If you can't execute and exploit that, it doesn't really matter. So it all comes back to the same thing. You've just got to get out there, play your game, execute, and on a day-to-day basis, things change. So you may have to adjust.

Q. Did you have to change your serve, or not?

TAYLOR DENT: No.

Q. Same serve as before?

TAYLOR DENT: It's the same serve.

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