

March 29, 2009

Sony Ericsson Open

R. FEDERER/N. Kiefer

6-4, 6-1

An interview with:

ROGER FEDERER

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Playing Taylor Dent. Are you surprised that he's back and everything that he's been through? He said that he remembers beating you in the juniors.

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, I remember that, too.

Q. You owe him now, right?

ROGER FEDERER: Um, look, I mean, I know -- I don't know if I should be surprised if he's back or not. Did he ever announce retirement?

Q. No, he was out. He was in a body cast and all that.

ROGER FEDERER: I don't know how bad it really was, but I assume it was pretty bad being out for that long. I mean, we know each other since a long time, but we never really hung out too much.

We were friendly, but we never played each other on tour, so we never really had that whole thing going.

So it's great to see him back, you know, playing. He was always a dangerous player, you know, on tour, because he was a aggressive, offensive and, you know, making you -- kind of make the match decide on a couple of passing shots here and there, you know.

It's going to be interesting for me to see how he plays. I actually never played him, so I can't compare before and after injury. I'm looking forward to a good match.

Q. What were the circumstances of your matchup? What do you remember about when you played him in the juniors?

ASAP sports

...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at asapsports.com

ROGER FEDERER: Well, it was a leadup tournament to Wimbledon, a semifinals, agents all over the fence. And just excited to see both of us play.

I mean, he had the famous father, you know, so he came from tennis, a tennis background.

I think he already maybe was signed with IMG. I'm not sure. It was just a match that agents and people kind of wanted to see. I lost in three sets. It was a decent match. I think he was serve and volleying quite a bit. I remember a funny story. Actually, he had to play the Wimbledon first round I think the same time a his father played the seniors, you know.

Everybody was expecting he couldn't play because of that, because he was -- the father was a coach maybe at the time. I'm not sure, you know. So it was kind of a bit strange scheduling for him.

Anyway, I went on to win, but it was -- yeah, I'm not sure if he actually won Roehampton. Did he win it? I think he lost in the finals maybe. I'm not sure.

Q. At that time you were known for your temper. Did you have any kind of meltdown or anything in that match?

ROGER FEDERER: I don't remember, actually.

Q. He said he had a meltdown in that match.

ROGER FEDERER: Did he? He lost his cool? Good. (laughter.) I hope he does the same again.

No, no. I mean, I just remember it wasn't one of my greatest matches, but that isn't what I expected against him. The points were kept so short, anyway. We both had probably like five matches of grass court experience, you know. That's what we had in our body.

Q. Can you ever allow yourself a little bit of empathy when you play someone like that when they've come back from being off, they were in a body cast, or is that not even in your head?

R Federer - 03 29 09 (2).doc

ROGER FEDERER: It will come in -- I'm happy that the guy is back, and I'm happy he's playing well.

But I was more like that when I was coming up actually, thinking, you know, I've -- I don't know. I'm from Switzerland. I have a great life. Tennis is fun, but it's not everything. So if the guy is better, he deserves to win, you know. I had more of that mindset when I was coming up and about.

Today it's different. I just try to play well and hope that I win, you know. I don't think you carry that off into the locker room or any elsewhere. But of course I'm happy if he plays well and gets back into the top 50, but he doesn't necessarily need to beat me in the next match to do so. He has many other tournaments.

That's the way I see it. In tennis you get many opportunities. It's a big one for him, you know, when we play.

Q. You talked a little bit at Indian Wells about fatherhood, and a handful of men have won majors being a father, but not too many at the U.S. Open and Wimbledon where you've had the most success. Have your thoughts evolved on that at all since then? Mirka is such a big part of your team. She's going to be preoccupied. How do you think that might play out?

ROGER FEDERER: Um, well, I just think she'll drop all the stuff she's been doing so far and just become a mother, what she's always wanted to be. I don't think it's going to change a lot for what she has to do. She's been busy anyway before, so now she's busy in a different way.

She told me she still wants to travel as much as possible. We'll see how that turns out to be. We don't know yet. I'm sure we'll find good solutions. You know, we have, I mean, the financial background. You know, traveling, we can make it easy. Hotels, we can make it easy.

So that's great, you know. But at the same time, I think it's the mindset that's most important. I think we both are relaxed, we're both happy and excited, and I think that's why it's going to work out. I haven't actually had fears that I was not going to be able to play tennis after having a child, you know. That's never crossed my mind, to be honest.

Q. But tennis is a selfish endeavor. You have to focus on yourself. With a kid...

ROGER FEDERER: Well, on tennis, not on my -- I'll still take decisions that are best for my game, you know. I have had a team in the past, you know. There's just an added a member to the team. It's going to be all right.

Q. After this Miami tournament, you will be reaching the clay season. Will you be preparing a different way to perhaps have your first French Open?

ROGER FEDERER: This year? I don't know if I'm preparing any different. It's always pretty much the same schedule. I guess a different preparation were to be, you know, for instance, not to play Miami. You know, take more time off to get ready for the clay court season.

I was considering that this year. But then at the same time, I like this tournament. I've played well here in the past. I think, you know, by winning matches it's always most important. You know, confidence is a.

Big thing in our game. This year I'm planning to play, what is it, Madrid and Rome. I'll just practice, you know, a ton, because we haven't played on clay for, what is it, eight months maybe, nine months? So it's pretty tricky for everybody always.

Q. Jo-Wilfried Tsonga. I have a question how a player goes from being dangerous in the draw to breaking through to the next level.

ROGER FEDERER: Consistency I think is most important. I think everybody who's young and up and coming is dangerous for the top players just because they're fearless, you know. That makes them really dangerous. Especially they usually like the big matches, you know, center court, you name it, you know. Night session against the top guys.

This is where it's most dangerous for us. That's why it's not always an advantage to be the top guy, you know, like I've been for so many years.

But he's, I think, a particularly good player when it matters most. I think with age you start to be able to motivate and to stay calm over a longer period of time, you know.

I remember when I was coming up I had great wins, you know. But reaching quarterfinals and semifinals stage I was already so exhausted from the pressure and from just being around pros

and playing them. With the emotions running through me, you know, I was done by the quarters or semifinals.

You learn how to, you know, save your energy and when to go crazy. You don't have to go crazy after every point. That's what I used to do. I either commentated every shot or I got happy after every shot. I lost a lot of energy like this when I was younger.

Q. When you go out to meet an opponent now, or prepare for one, you've won so much, for you, are you thinking, I really want to beat this guy. Is it the competition, or is it for you now about execution? I would like to do this with my game. Do you still feel that sort of hunger? I just want to beat this guy? Do you understand what I mean?

ROGER FEDERER: Um, I don't know. I mean, I just like to win, you know, so it doesn't matter who's in front of me. I just like the thrill of winning and playing good tennis.

I like to play great and win, no doubt. Like today, if, you know, I hit good shots and I end up winning the match, it's a great feeling. It's a better feeling than, you know, like pushing the ball into the court and hoping for the other guy to miss.

It's never really been my game, so I didn't have this problem. I like to go chase victory. You know, then if you win, you're happy; if you lose, it's something very normal in tennis. You know, you can't have them all. But you've got to give it your best shot, and that's what I try to do by preparing in the best possible way.

And, you know, playing in front of the fans, I think that's exhilarating, for me anyway, especially now that I have so many great fans around the world.

Q. You talked about your preparations for Paris. When you've won Australia, it seems like there has been a lot more conversation about that because of the Grand Slam and, you know, you've been so close the last few years. Is it fair to say that you've sort of compartmentalized Paris a little bit more this year? You've put it away more in the background than you have maybe in the last few years?

ROGER FEDERER: Um, you mean...

Q. Just in terms of not thinking about it before? You really need to think about it?

ROGER FEDERER: No, I've pushed it for after Miami, you know. I've always prepared since December, and February usually I always start preparing already for the big occasions, and that includes Paris, of course, as well.

So it's in the back of my mind, you know, but it's never there, really, like, I'm -- as long as I'm on a different surface, there's not much thought to it, you know.

This year was just easy because I haven't played from Australia until Indian Wells, and that was six weeks of not having to do press, not having to answer any questions about Paris.

Then when I got to Indian Wells and Miami, there was talk about the baby, talk about Darren Cahill, talk about me being back, and not talk about Paris. Maybe that's why you think, you know, I haven't been thinking about it.

But I always have the same mindset, you know, regardless of where I am in the season. The moment I hit clay, that is a different story.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports