

March 26, 2009

Sony Ericsson Open

An interview with:

RAFAEL NADAL

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. This is kind of about your countryman, Fernando Verdasco. What do you see in him in the last year or two that he went from, like, 20th to like top 10? Obviously we know he's training hard with Agassi's guys. What have you seen out of Fernando that made him so good right now?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, I don't know. Maybe he relax a little bit more on court, no? Yeah, he's playing with more calm, having less mistakes. I don't think so the changes, practicing on Las Vegas or something like this, no? Because I think he had a good team for the last few years, and, you know, in two weeks didn't change the world, you know.

Going two weeks to Las Vegas, I don't think you change your tennis. No, I think it's a long time work. And I think he, yeah, he's playing better than before. But the potential was there before, too. So the thing is right now, seems like he's a little bit more focused on court.

Q. Did you hit with him as a young man? Did you guys hit a lot together? I know he's older than you.

RAFAEL NADAL: No, no, I didn't hit with him.

Q. I'm wondering what your impression was of Andy Roddick's game last week. He was just in here talking about his conditioning program. He's lost some weight. Did you see any change in the way he's playing the game these days, or was it the same Andy?

RAFAEL NADAL: No, I think he started the season better than last year's. Yeah, he's playing well, no?

I think seems like he has more motivation right now than last few years. That's my feeling, but you never know.

Q. You've had a lot of time off and still have some more time off before your first match. What have you been doing in Miami other than practice?

RAFAEL NADAL: No, not much. I was in the party yesterday, tennis party. And -- yes, no, no. Not too much. Practicing.

Q. It's Toni's first time here for a couple of years, your coach.

RAFAEL NADAL: Since 2006.

Q. Since 2006. Your first practice with him was yesterday or today?

RAFAEL NADAL: Today.

Q. Did he say anything to you about last week, and does he immediately try to do something...

RAFAEL NADAL: I am playing much better right now. No, come on. (laughter.)

Q. Can you see something? Does he say, I watched you on TV. Maybe you should try this or you should do that or...

RAFAEL NADAL: No, no. He came, and first day is -- well, he watch me on the TV. So, yes, he was very happy about last week, about the tournament at Indian Wells.

I don't know. He's coming here to relax and, well, trying to continue the good work of the last week.

Q. You always say that Roger is the favorite. Right now you are always the favorite at every tournament. Does it add pressure to you, or do you feel differently to be the chased one now?

RAFAEL NADAL: Different between 2 and 1? Completely the same for me. Yeah, no changes.

Q. Why?

RAFAEL NADAL: For me the goal is the same: try to improve my tennis and try to continuing have the good results. In the end, is

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only one number. No. 1 and No. 2 is only one number of difference.

You know, I say it 100 times, no? I didn't go to sleep thinking if I am No. 1 or No. 2, and I didn't wake up thinking about if I am the No. 1 or No. 2.

I think about I have to play well today or I have to practice well today. I have to improve. Yeah.

Q. Andy was asked if he would rather play you or Roger. He didn't answer. I don't think you're going to answer it. Who would you rather play, Andy or Roger?

RAFAEL NADAL: With who? I didn't understand.

Q. Andy was asked who he wanted to play if he made it in the final, if it would be you or Roger. He did not answer. Who would you rather play of those two?

RAFAEL NADAL: (Through translation.) I would love to play the final is the answer, yeah. (Laughter.)

Q. You've been playing a lot of hardcourt tennis recently. How does your body feel heading into the clay season? How do your knees feel?

RAFAEL NADAL: Okay. Yeah. You can see, no? Okay. I started the season really well, yeah? No problems.

Q. Would you prefer to go out with a girl that is in tennis, that is a tennis player, or any other girl? Just has nothing to do with it.

RAFAEL NADAL: It is not -- I don't have any preference, you know. Prefer go out with nice and funny girl. Doesn't matter if is player or artist.

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