

March 26, 2009

Sony Ericsson Open

An interview with:

ANDY MURRAY

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You said at Indian Wells that you were a little bit surprised that you'd gotten all the way through to the final, given that you hadn't been well before that tournament. It's sort of four hard weeks. How would you assess your physical state and your approach to this tournament?

ANDY MURRAY: I feel much better, much better prepared this week than at Indian Wells. I obviously played a lot of matches there. Probably four days of practicing on these courts before my first match. You know, it's been pretty blustery on the courts and whatnot.

Yeah, I've had a couple of hours each day. Physically, I feel fine. A little bit jet-lagged, but in terms of my legs and, you know, energy levels, I feel fine.

Q. It's almost kind of a home from home here. How comfortable do you feel at this particular tournament?

ANDY MURRAY: Yeah, it's nice. First year that I will be able to stay in my apartment. I've spent a lot of time here in the last year and a half or so, obviously training, you know, taken a couple of holidays here as well.

I know Miami relatively well. Obviously nice to get to sort of stay in your own bed at the tournament. That doesn't happen too much throughout the year.

Q. Are you enjoying a little bit the fact that the first four or five top spots in the national world rankings are really up for grabs, and everybody is in position to be the best player on the circuit? Are you enjoying that?

ANDY MURRAY: Yeah. Well, I mean, the last couple of years I think it's been much, much better for tennis. Obviously Roger was so

dominant before that everyone just sort of expected, you know, him to win everything.

Now it's obviously a lot more open. But Nadal, he holds three of the four slams. He's strong on clay. Right now he's starting to, you know, sort of gain a bit of ground on everyone. I think he's quite a bit in front.

But I still feel, like you say, on any given day -- it's not just the top four or five guys. I think it's going up to sort of 10, 15, where they can beat the top players. It's definitely more interesting for tennis now.

Q. What gave you the most encouragement last week to draw on coming into this event?

ANDY MURRAY: I think physically, you know, I was very surprised, you know, how, I mean, lucky I only had to play once back-to-back days before the, you know, the final. But Robredo pulled out there, so obviously I was recovering decent after the matches because I had some time.

But, you know, I was expecting to feel pretty rough on the court and struggling with my breathing whatnot. I obviously put in a lot of hard work in December and stuff and obviously had some reserves there that I didn't necessarily know I had before. I feel this week coming in I'm much better prepared.

Q. Did it come as a big relief that you didn't have glandular fever or mono or anything like that?

ANDY MURRAY: Yeah, it was tough, because when I had the first batch of sort of tests done, I got told it's not glandular fever, and then the next morning I got a call saying this it could be. Then I was starting to panic a little bit.

You know, I think Ancic has had to go home again this week because he's struggling again with, you know, illness and stuff. Those things can drag on for a long time. Especially for sports people, it takes even longer because we're doing a lot of exercise and it comes back.

Yeah, I was obviously pleased it wasn't that, because it's a pretty debilitating illness. I'm

just happy I'm feeling good again.

Q. Does it affect the way you practice here and prepare for the matches, the wind?

ANDY MURRAY: No. I mean, at Indian Wells, it was totally calm pretty much until the finals there. You know, when I've been practicing it's been windy, but it's -- I mean, there's some wind that's tricky and some wind that's strong and changes the way you have to play a little bit.

But it's always going in the same direction, not swirling around and changing every, you know, couple minutes. Just from one end you're obviously hitting into the wind, and from other, you're with it. You can adjust your game for that.

The thing that was tough at Indian Wells was that it was changing every couple of minutes and even during some of the points. It was tough to control the ball.

Q. Safin was saying in Indian Wells that he thinks, or at least he was, a bit surprised by Nadal's hands. They were better than he expected. Is there anything about the way Rafa's improved technically stroke-wise that's taken you by surprise, or does it all make perfect sense to you?

ANDY MURRAY: Well, I mean, he has been very close to being -- he was 2 in the world for three or four straight years. So he's always been unbelievable.

But, you know, he's starting to play a bit more aggressive than he used to on the hard courts. When he's closer to the baseline, he's a bit -- he's more comfortable than he used to be.

I just think when he won his first slam outside of clay, I think that's, I don't know, he just seems a bit more comfortable on the quicker surfaces.

With his racquet head speed and how sort of heavy he can hit the ball, he would have always been able to play well on hard courts. Just mentally sometimes it takes a little bit of -- just winning a big event like he obviously -- that match at Wimbledon was so close to going the other way. Never know what might have happened had he lost that.

But since then, if you look at his game, not a whole a lot has changed. He's able to keep the ball much lower off the net, and I think that's why he's playing better on the quicker courts.

Q. You are one of the fewer players that have beaten Roger. Rafa is a lefty player

ASAP sports

...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at asapsports.com

so it helps him. What helps you against Roger? What is the key to your successes against Roger, do you think?

ANDY MURRAY: There's obviously not just one thing. You know, I have to play very well to win against him.

But if you watch the matches when I played him, you know, I'm not trying to hit winners on every point. I'm not trying to finish points early. Just keeping myself in the points and trying to keep to the ball to a good length, and when I'm in trouble, sort of keeping his ball low on his backhand because he's not so dangerous from there.

Each time I play against him, you have to change little things, because he adjusts his game as well. When you play against any of the Nadal, Federer, Djokovic, you need to keep changing little things because they're going expect you to do what you did in the last match, especially if you won against them.

So it's not just as easy as Nadal being a lefty, why he beats you.

Q. Obviously you guys are different players. Do you ever look at how Rafa played Roger as any kind of roadmap for you, or can you just feel what you do and made your progression that way?

ANDY MURRAY: Well, I watched. I watched so many of Roger's matches when I was growing up. I had a couple bad injuries when I was younger and watched loads of tennis.

So when I did come back on the tour or get to that level, I knew how I had to play against him. The one thing that I always thought, or it looked like from watching, was that everyone was just trying to play so well all the time to win against him, trying like too hard and trying to hit the ball to the line and playing the game style that necessarily didn't work for them.

You know, I made sure that when I played against him I haven't tried to do that. I haven't felt that just because I'm playing Federer I have to hit every ball on the line and stuff.

So it's not -- I just learned a lot from watching when I was growing up.

Q. The celebrated thing about Rafa is that it's like playing against a wall and he never gives up. You all are in extraordinarily good shape and you're very fast. What's it feel like,

that particular kind of vulnerability, and how do you deal with it as a player?

ANDY MURRAY: Before the Indian Wells match I won three times against him, you know, in a row, and started to feel quite comfortable playing against him.

Yeah, he's so consistent and really fast. You know, he has obviously one of the heaviest forehands the game has ever seen.

Again, it's easy to think, you know, I have to play unbelievable all the time. That's not always the case. I have to pick the right shots to go for the lines and play aggressive against him, and then you've got a chance.

It is obviously very difficult, because when you get more tired in the tight situations, you know he's not going to give the points to you. That's where, I mean, you have to be very strong mentally to win against him, especially in the big matches tight situations.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports