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MASTERS

A. RODDICK/T. de Bakker

7-6, 6-4

An interview with:

ANDY RODDICK

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You had a lot of breakpoint opportunities today. I didn't see the final stats, but it was tough converting them. What was he doing, aside from the pace on his serve, that made it tough for you to convert?

ANDY RODDICK: Um, well, I think most of the time he played pretty good points. I had one good look at a forehand pass off of an overhead on like a quick reaction, and I rushed a little bit. But, you know, overall, I mean, if you're 1 for 1 for 1 for 7, it's pretty much the same deal.

I like the fact that I'm getting myself looks. It means I'm putting returns in the court. You know, I was putting some first serve returns in, and I feel like - I haven't seen the stats - but I feel like I won my fair share of second serve return points again.

So that's a good sign.

Q. Are you completely recovered from your illness, and how long has that affected you?

ANDY RODDICK: I don't know. I mean, I was feeling a little ordinary at the end of the match the other night; I felt better today. But I don't know if there's, you know, any way -- I definitely feel a lot better than I have, you know, the last couple months.

But there's no way of knowing when I got it. I just, you know, felt a little bit slow and lethargic, and some days I wasn't able to go very

long. And when I hit the ball, it was a steep slope. There wasn't like any working through it and kind of working through the tiredness.

For me, knowing what you're dealing with was a huge mental relief, as opposed to just like I'm sitting here thinking, Okay, two months I go I was moving and playing great, and now I'm feeling pretty slow. I don't know what happened. I think more than anything, that was a relief for me.

Q. The weather hasn't been as hot as it can be here sometimes. Is that helpful to you?

ANDY RODDICK: Yes. Yeah, I think so. You know, normally I love the heat. I don't mind it at all. I like the way the heat plays. The ball jumps around a little bit more.

But, you know, anything right now that can kind of keep it out of that realm is fine by me.

Q. Was experience the decisive factor today in your match?

ANDY RODDICK: I just feel like I was more solid. The thing about him, I like those matches where you remember the points that he won, you know, because they're spectacular. But then, you know, I'm putting the balls in every time in every point and making it work and not making a lot of easy errors, moving the ball around, differing spins, you know, so it doesn't look overwhelming.

But time after time there's a repeater effect. Today I felt like I had that. I felt I was just more consistent overall.

Q. I know you were kind of trying to mix up your game a little bit, go to the net once in a while. What factors do you consider when you decide that, Okay, I'm gonna go to the net?

ANDY RODDICK: Well, a lot of it's what's given to you. You can't just make the decision to go to the net. You have to have the right ball. Right now, if there's something short, I'm gonna try to do it.

Like I said, like we talked about the other night, you know, it's not all about wining that point. It's about showing a different look. If I'm playing

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A Roddick - 08 18 10

someone and know that I can't leave a ball short, it plays into the thought process on every shot, even if it's just a rally ball.

That's something that -- I didn't win many percentage points today, but a little least that kind of variable was in play.

Q. When you pulled out of, was it Rome or Monte-Carlo? I can't remember. But when you pulled out of...

ANDY RODDICK: Both.

Q. Oh. Do you think the mono went all the way back that far?

ANDY RODDICK: Oh, I think you're talking about Madrid.

Q. Okay.

ANDY RODDICK: Um, I don't know. I mean, that's what -- in the conversation with the doctors, our conversation went back that far. But as far as, you know, it's not like something where, you know, I know I sprained my ankle on this date. It's tough to say.

Maybe. I mean, obviously I was pretty sick there. At the time we thought it was a stomach virus. But, I mean, who knows?

Q. Your next match will be either Soderling or Hewitt. You're 1-2 against Soderling, and you've tied up with Hewitt 6-All. Talk a little bit about potential matchups with those guys, what you have to do really well.

ANDY RODDICK: Well, it certainly doesn't get easier. Both those guys -- Soderling has completely changed the course of his career the last year and a half. Lleyton is a Hall of Fame player, you know, no doubt.

That being said, there's not gonna be a lot of similarities between the two if you play 'em. Lleyton, about what I was talking about earlier, is, you know, he makes you work on every point. He doesn't give you an inch, you know, makes second serve returns, you know, doesn't play himself out of points.

Robin is a lot of upside. You know, he goes big on his shots, you know, so there are -- both very tough, but completely different styles.

Q. Do you have any preference?

ANDY RODDICK: No. I mean...

Q. You've won the last five matches against Hewitt, so I didn't know if maybe...

ANDY RODDICK: Yeah, a lot of those I won before 6-4 in the fifth and 7-5 in the third, you know, so it's a deceiving stat. Either one is gonna be really tough. I'm just happy that I feel like I'm -- regardless of what happens from this point forward, I feel like I'm playing decent tennis again. So that's a relief.

Q. An American hasn't won the US Open since you did it in '03? Do you think it would be a boost for U.S. tennis if you or another American could win it?

ANDY RODDICK: Well, define what you mean by U.S. tennis, because that's a vague term. If you're talking about TV ratings and participation and stuff like that, the numbers suggest those things have never been higher.

So what exactly are we talking about?

Q. I guess those things, and also just kind of the whole image of it. This is the first time in a long time there hasn't been a top 10...

ANDY RODDICK: Well, I'm not concerned with image will. I'm concerned with the reality of the situation. There's not a top 10 player right now. I have about ten tournaments on the board right now, and I'm, what 11 or 12 or whatever, and, you know, have played about four or five good months. So I'm not worried about that.

On the flip side, it's been a while since we've had four in the top 20, and we're flirting with that right now, or top 25. So you can basically make the stats say whatever you want to. Just ask a statistician. It depends on who you ask.

But, you know, I think the game is strong. If you're looking at attendance, if you're looking at sponsorship, we're one of the only sports that didn't take a monster hit during the downturn in the economy. We're a global sport. We're not just in the U.S.

But all the numbers that are being reported as far as apparel sales, participation, TV ratings, you know, this, that, and the other are up. So I have a hard time dealing with the question that says, What's wrong?

If money is coming into the normal business, then that's normally a good thing.

Q. I'm doing a feature on the ball girls and ball boys here at the tournament. What do

you think of them. You can be pretty intense on the court. What advice would you have to a newbie?

ANDY RODDICK: Just forgive me. You know, they actually do a really good job here. I'm testy, at best, if I'm being nice to myself on the court. But they do a real good job here. I was a ball kid. I feel like most of the guys who are here have been a ball kid at some point.

So, you know, we certainly appreciate them, even if we don't show it in the heat of the moment at the time. (Laughing.)

Q. Who was the player you really admired when you were coming up as a ball kid?

ANDY RODDICK: Jeez, I -- you know what? Well, if someone's nice on the court, they're focusing their energy in the wrong way.

But I was actually a ball boy for college tennis. I remember doing O'Brien and David Dilucia. It was the Rolex college tournament in Austin when I was growing up, so that's the one I did.

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