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MASTERS

M. FISH/F. Verdasco

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An interview with:

MARDY FISH

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please. .

Q. Another big win. You're close to the 32 spot. Talk about the match a little bit.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, it's a great win. Thought it was pretty high quality. I mean, any time you can win tiebreakers, you feel like you're sort of lucky to get through if you win both of 'em, especially against someone like him that controls the points really well with his forehand.

So, you know, I was lucky to win both of those, but I felt like I deserved at least one of 'em.

Q. Do you think it's a little more than luck? You're 15 and 3 on in tiebreakers.

MARDY FISH: And I'm aware of that. I'm aware that I'm high in tiebreaks this year, yeah.

I don't know why, because I haven't been great in the tiebreaks throughout my career. I've probably been right around 500 if I were to guess, maybe even under. So I don't know why. I know I'm playing better, and that obviously helps.

Q. Can you elaborate a little bit on what your doubles play has brought to your game and how much more doubles you're gonna play in the future going forward.

MARDY FISH: Well, just speaking for my singles play, it helps, you know, like this week, for instance, to get a match before I play, to get on the courts, to feel the surface, feel how fast it is. You know, and just to have a competitive forum to work on my serve and work on coming forward, work on my volleys, which is my style of play.

And then just speaking as someone who loves playing doubles, you know, I'll always continue to play doubles probably as much as I have this year. Probably not any more. But that being said, I'm certainly committed to playing the rest of the year. There's not many tournaments left, to be quite honest. I'm not gonna play more than six or seven after that.

So there's not many left to play. So, you know, I'll -- I love playing with friends, and Mark Knowles is a great friend of mine. Obviously his career speaks for itself in doubles.

Q. Where a few of your favorites places to dine in the Cincinnati area?

MARDY FISH: Actually we've gone to this place Embers a few times. Do you know it?

Q. I do.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, it was really good. We've gone there the last two nights. I'll probably stick with that, to be honest, for the rest of the time if it works.

Q. Any other places besides Embers, maybe not just this year or...

MARDY FISH: Um, we go to McAllister's for lunch; Jimmy John's for lunch. That's all I've gone to so far. And IHOP for breakfast. There you go.

Q. A little bit about Richard Gasquet? You're 0-2. I think you played last in '08.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, he whooped me in Wimbledon, and we had a real close match in Madrid. That was the week after I got married, so I was probably a little overweight at that time, eating and drinking what I did in Cabo. So I felt like that result was actually relatively good. (Smiling.) No, I'm a completely different player than I was there.

That being said, he can beat anyone. He's got one of the best one-handed backhands in the world, and certainly controls his serve games with his serve. His first serve is very good. He'll be tough.

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But, you know, I had two good wins here, both in straight sets. You know, look forward to, you know, playing another round of 16 here.

Q. Do you attribute your demeanor out there in relative to you're not getting upset as much as maybe you would in the past. You're not riding the roller coaster. You're kind of just keep going.

MARDY FISH: Well, I'm playing better.

Q. So it's easy?

MARDY FISH: Yeah, and to be honest, I've been winning, so I'm a little more calm on the court when I've won, I don't know, what is it, 13 of my last 14. Sort of want to take back the one that I lost. It was 1:30 in the morning in D.C., so I kind of want that match back.

But I have been winning a lot and I have been playing better. Again, a lot of that has to do with -- this is a big mental game. I could have easily cracked a couple times out there today, and I didn't.

You know, that might have been the difference.

Q. Turning back the clock the last two, three months, was there a particular match or result that really you felt great about and couldn't wait to get back out there again?

MARDY FISH: I think maybe Murray in Miami. You know, that gave me -- I knew that I was hitting the ball well. I played Djokovic pretty close in Indian Wells the week before that, but it was only the second round. It was his first match. You don't know what to expect out of that and how he played.

And then playing Murray in Miami, he was the defending champion. He hadn't lost his first match in a tournament in 12 months. Basically the entire calendar year he hadn't lost his first match in a tournament, so you know he comes prepared in the first match.

To beat him there - 6-4, 6-4 was the score - that just gave me -- you know, I'm not sure how -- what kind of level he played at or what he felt like he played at. He obviously probably didn't feel like he was playing as well as the year before there, but I didn't care.

I felt like he's one of the best hardcourt players in the world. That gave me the confidence knowing that I was back, my knee felt good,

physically I felt great, and I could play with those guys.

Q. I'm doing a story on the ball boys and ball girls here, and I've been asking them who their favorite players are. Your name comes up every time.

MARDY FISH: Oh, I doubt that.

Q. What do you think of the ball boys and balls girls here, and what is your own personal philosophy in dealing with them?

MARDY FISH: They're great. They're very good here. Throughout the summer in the States they're always very good. They seem a little bit older here than some of the other tournaments, so, you know, sometimes you can boss them around a little bit.

But I don't know. I'm not sure who said I was their favorite. To be honest, you're usually just so -- I mean, obviously you're aware of who does a good job and they're out there, but you're just so focused on trying to win that it's really tough to try to interact with them as much as maybe you would like.

I guess that's the fun of being a ball boy. I was a ball boy when I was younger, and think most everybody out here was.

Q. Who inspired you when you were a ball boy who you thought was a nice player and treated you well?

MARDY FISH: That's tough. You know what? I was a big fan of Jim Courier back then. Not necessarily how he treated everyone on the court, but just how intense he was. I felt like I was right there in the action. I think that's one of the things that they love about it, the ball boys and girls.

I just admired just how competitive like all the guys were. I'm not sure one specific player jumps out at me. I was in awe of just how big they hit the ball and how fast and how quick the sport was.

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