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**6-2, 7-5**

An interview with:

## **RAFAEL NADAL**

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. What was will key difference between the first and second sets today? Looked almost like two different matches.**

RAFAEL NADAL: No, I don't think was two different matches, no? The beginning I think he had a lot of mistakes. When I put the ball inside, he had too many unforced errors.

And in the second, yeah, you know, it happens when I play against big server like Taylor. The match was close, and I was waiting to have my chance, but you are out of the rhythm a from the baseline, no, because he's not giving to you the long point, and it's difficult to have the touch of the -- the feeling of ball, no?

So he played a good game, one winner after a good close return. And, yeah, that's what happened. He break me, and I was a little bit lucky after that to have the break with one net. That's help me, so one mistake from him.

So, yeah, was close second set. After, I came back to break. But anyway, I think I had more chances than him in the second, too. I was break down, but I had a breakpoint in the first game on the second, I think. So it's true. Was closer the second, but I still think I deserved to win the second.

**Q. The speed of the courts here compared to Toronto, a lot players have been saying they've been playing a lot faster. This was your first match here in Cincinnati. Can you elaborate on the differences between two**

**big hardcourt tournaments back to back, but yet different speeds?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, that's something in the future the tournaments can work to make the courts more...

**Q. Consistent?**

RAFAEL NADAL: The same, no? Make the courts similar, more similar between Toronto and here or between Montreal and here, no? Because, you know, for us it's difficult to adapt, especially if you only have one or two days. When you arrive semifinals or finals, it's not easy to adapt, especially in the beginning.

So it's big change. This first match always is very dangerous.

**Q. When you're in a match, what are some things that you say either to yourself or to the crowd or the with the fist pumps? What do you do to get through a match, to either stay in it or get through it?**

RAFAEL NADAL: (Through translation.) Nothing. I don't know. I think my point, so...

No, I was there fighting every point and try my best. I don't say nothing to me. (Smiling.)

**Q. Your return points, you did very well on the return. The first serve in the 30%, and the second serve in the mid-60s winning percentage when he was serving. Speak about that, about your return today. I think it was improved.**

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, not easy to return his second serve. For sure the first is more difficult, no?

But the second serve is fast, too. It's coming with spins, different slice, kick. So wasn't easy to return. I know I can't go back two or three meters behind the baseline, because the court is faster here and then I didn't have the chance -- if he had a good serve and volley with second serve, I didn't have the chance to pass him if I go three meters behind.

So I try to return inside the court the

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second serve, and I think I did okay. I did well, so I'm happy with that.

**Q. When you're playing such a big server like Taylor, what adjustments do you make in your return game? You broke him four times today, and you were only broken yourself once.**

RAFAEL NADAL: No, I just try to wait my moment, be patient a little bit. And after, is important -- you don't gonna have a lot of opportunities, so when he miss the first serve, it's important that he feels the pressure. He feels that if he miss the first serve, he gonna have big chance to lose the point.

So that's the only thing you can do.

**Q. Do you stand further behind the baseline?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Depends of the court. If I have to return this second serve on clay, I gonna go three meters behind and play a long shot and we gonna have the point. Or if he do serve and volley with the second, I gonna have much time to try to have the passing shot.

I played against him in Miami and the court was slow. I can change a little bit, I can return inside few times, and be behind the baseline another times.

But here with this court, it's faster, the first day without rhythm, it was difficult for me go back three meters and try to be inside for the ball. It's not an easy position for him.

**Q. Going back to the previous question about the speed of the court from Toronto and here, which of these two is more comparable to New York?**

RAFAEL NADAL: All different, because the ball is a big difference. You know, the ball here is Penn and is the Wilson at US Open. So it's very different, the ball. But is a mixed between both, I think. I think it's slower than here for sure, but at the same time it's a little bit faster than Toronto. The bounce is not that high than Toronto.

So I will love to have that ball in US Open.

**Q. A what's your inspiration to do your best, give your best when you're out on the court?**

RAFAEL NADAL: No one. I just focus on the match. My motivation is keep improving my tennis, enjoy to play, because I am, I think, very

lucky guy to be here for the eighth year on the tour. So it's long time. Still 24, so that's unbelievable for me.

I did more than what I thought seven, six years ago, so I feel very happy. My motivation is just keep improving, and I think just not only when I am on the court, when I gonna practice. That's my motivation. Be better player year by year.

**Q. When you have some free time during a tournament, what are some things you look to do off-court visiting cities?**

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, here I don't visit nothing, no? It's a little bit far the city, so I stay at the hotel or I gonna play golf before.

**Q. If you're in another city, some of the other ones...**

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, well, next week for example in New York, yes, I walk around a little bit in the city. I go for the musicals sometimes, to watch musicals. But that's before the tournament.

When you start the tournament -- the day of, yes, maybe you have the afternoon to do a few things. But it's difficult because you practice and everything is -- you don't have a lot of time. When you come back from a practice or if you play a long match the last day, you want to relax a little bit.

In this case, next week I gonna have one week there before the tournament. For sure I gonna do different things.

**Q. There's nobody playing on the circuit today that was even born the last time there was no American ranked in the top 10. Is that bad for the overall health of tennis, not to have an American in the top 10?**

RAFAEL NADAL: (Through translation.) The ranking is the ranking. Looks a little bit strange, but Roddick gonna have big chance to finish the year top 10, I think. I think he gonna do it.

Sam Querrey and John Isner are potentially Top 10s if they keep improving, I think, no? So it's bad for the tennis? Well, always the same. Tennis is a global sport around the world, so I think doesn't change a lot if the Americans are 8 or are 11.

I think that doesn't make a big difference.

**Q. Do we need an American to be among the top players then, maybe the top 3 or**

**4? Like when you were growing up there was Agassi and Sampras, and we don't have that now.**

RAFAEL NADAL: That's very difficult to have that always. Now other players, you know; it's not only in America that you play tennis. Tennis players in all the world.

America is a big country, yes, very important country for the tennis, but...

**Q. I just wonder if you worry about losing the casual tennis fan, not the hard-core tennis fan.**

RAFAEL NADAL: (Through translation.) I repeat. I think, for example, Roddick don't need to be top 10 to be very famous or to be very popular around the world. Because he did a lot for the tennis and did a lot on the tour the last ten years.

So I think, I repeat, you know, if next year I gonna be -- if I am No. 12, do you think it change a lot? No. The thing is if you are ready to win tournaments. You know, when I start and when I was 18 years old, 20 years old, for me was very important for me the ranking, because you start and you want to be in the top.

For me, still important, no? But the more important thing is be ready to try to win titles. And if Andy, for example, is ready to win these titles, I think for him is not the most important thing the ranking, because he was in the top 8 for ten years.

**Q. Your next match is against Benneteau, and you haven't played him in five years. Talk about his game, what have to do well, and the challenges of playing someone you haven't played in a long time.**

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, I don't remember. But anyway, I know him; he know me. I think gonna be a very difficult match. He's playing well, beating Wawrinka and beating Llodra in the first round. So I think gonna be a very difficult match.

I gonna try to play my best tennis. Only like this I gonna have chances. I have to be aggressive and try to have control of the point. That's it.

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