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MASTERS

M. FISH/A. Roddick

4-6, 7-6, 6-1

An interview with:

MARDY FISH

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Since your coach wasn't here this week, what did you tell yourself during the second rain delay to turn yourself around?

MARDY FISH: He is here, actually. We spoke about -- is that the 6-4, 5-2 rain delay? Yeah, I mean, you're almost done, so it's -- you know, what can you say besides, you know, try to hold serve and make him serve it out. That's the only thing you can do.

You know, they sort of threw us out there right away at that 5-2 game -- I didn't know how long the wait was gonna be -- without a warm-up or anything, so I was lucky to even get out of that game, to be honest.

You know, you don't want to be serving in that spot, and you don't want to be in that spot at all. I was lucky to get out of it.

Q. How did you get yourself back into the match?

MARDY FISH: Well, you know, you could see that in that situation, you know, guys are gonna be nervous. And, you know, trying to serve it out, as big of a service game as Andy has, you know you don't real feel too confident.

I just tried to make him play as much as I could. I tried not to make too many errors on that game. I think I missed a second serve return and maybe missed a passing shot to lose the two points that I lost in that game.

I made him play four points.

Q. What do you do during that really brief delay in the second set when you were in the locker room?

MARDY FISH: It wasn't long at all. It was only a couple minutes that we were back there, so I just changed. Didn't really do anything besides talk to -- I couldn't, you know, shower. I like it shower before every time. It was only a couple minutes.

Q. You talked a little bit about your serve. You only lost four points on your first serve the whole night, or afternoon. Seems to be much improved. What did you do to change it?

MARDY FISH: Yeah, well, my serve has always been a weapon in my game, and I've always had a high percentage of winning first serves. It's just that I don't get very many in. I don't think I served at a ridiculously high level today.

Q. 46%.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, and I can feel it. You know, I know when I don't serve at a high percentage. I know when I'm serving and winning points on my first serve, and I can feel when I'm getting a lot of free points. I didn't really feel like I was getting a ton of free points; i don't feel like I had a ton of aces.

So I didn't serve as well as, you know, I had against Gasquet maybe. I served almost 70% against him, so sort of up and up and down.

Q. How is the ankle?

MARDY FISH: It's fine. Yeah, just for precaution we taped it.

Q. How's the beard? Is that a tournament beard, a tournament-winning beard?

MARDY FISH: The beard? It's not much of a beard, is it? It's just kind of scruff.

No, I don't shave much.

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Q. Can you think anything differently that you've done in the last two matches with Andy? Because prior to that you lost like nine straight.

MARDY FISH: Um, yeah, I mean, I think he's played better matches against me in the past. I think I got him sort of at a good time in Atlanta when he was not as confident as he usually is. I think, you know, the way he's felt in the past month or so...

You know, we were both in a really good position in the semis of a Masters Series. I felt great. I've never felt better on the court and I've never been more confident and I've never played better. So I kept that in the back of my head, you know, that I've won a lot of matches this summer. You know, tried to take as much confidence from that as I can.

Q. Do you think that's because of your weight loss?

MARDY FISH: I mean, I think it has a ton to do with it. You know, that and then being able to put in the hours, you know, put in the work that I can on my forehand and improve some of the things I need to improve.

Q. After you won Atlanta, I notice there's a commentary on the SI website. Fish may surpass Roddick as America's best tennis player. What is your comment on that?

MARDY FISH: No, I mean, I don't think -- the respect level that I have for Andy, just because I beat him a couple times doesn't mean that -- his career is incredible. I mean, he's won 30 tournaments and he's been No. 1 in the world. He's got all the accolades and he's a future Hall of Famer.

I've never been higher than 17 in the world, so there's no way I'm gonna say that.

Q. He does just say himself actually just now, that for the US Open, that in the group of guys behind the guys who usually are in the mix, you have put yourself in the conversation I think is the words he used. Do you feel like that yourself?

MARDY FISH: I think it's fair to say. It's fair that -- I've won a lot of matches this summer, more than most guys. You know, the US Open Series, there's no better way to judge than that. I think I'm pretty high up on top of that list.

So, yeah, I feel great, like I said. I've done some things that I have never done in my career and won more matches this year up to this point than I ever have. I have a great opportunity to improve my ranking to where I've never been before.

I'm not sure where this puts me, even a loss tomorrow. But, you know, not having played a match pretty much after Wimbledon last year helps.

Q. You've said you thought your extra weight has led to maybe more injuries in the past.

MARDY FISH: Uh-huh.

Q. How much has the athleticism, equipment advances, length of the season, power, speed, and more events on hardcourts, how does it contribute to the wear and tear on your body?

MARDY FISH: Well, it's a long season, that's for sure. I can't speak for the technologies of the balls and the racquets and thing like that.

But I know just personally, you know, we wind down -- I think the Paris Masters Series starts on the 9th of November, and then we start again in early January in Brisbane. Not much of a break.

So, yeah, mentally and physically you can get pretty drained. I've done a pretty good job with my schedule this year, this summer especially. I've played a tournament and had a week off most of the weeks, so it's been good.

Q. Your tiebreak record this season is 7 to 4. What are key factors in...

MARDY FISH: I don't know. That's a good question. I've been 500 for most of my career, pretty much even. It certainly helps to win tiebreakers to win matches. That's been a huge part of my success this year, is winning tiebreakers. I mean, if I don't win the tiebreaker today, I lose the match in straight sets.

Confidence is a big thing. I've won quite a few this summer as well. So it's a lot of the luck, too.

Q. Any preference on who you play tomorrow?

MARDY FISH: No. I mean, it's not where I expected to be in the beginning of the week. Like I said, I knew I was playing well, but how high or

the level, you know, I wasn't too sure about.

So I feel like I can beat anyone, to be honest. I mean, I remember the final here in 2003 like it was yesterday. This will be my third Masters Series final. I desperately want to win one.

Q. Talk about the match tomorrow in terms of specifics, what challenges does Baghdatis' game present to you as well as Federer's?

MARDY FISH: Well, Marcos is a confidence player. Obviously he's playing with a lot of confidence making the finals of Washington and playing well here. He's beaten me every time we played. We played twice in Australia this year. We had a 7-6 in the third match in Sydney in the semis, so we've had some good matches for sure.

You know, and Roger, that speaks for itself. He's the best player we've got out here, and he's the best player we've ever seen. So he's got a lot of strengths.

Q. How do you combat him mentally, I guess, because he's such a dominant player so that you don't lose the match before you even start?

MARDY FISH: Well, that's not gonna happen. We haven't played since 2008 in Indian Wells and I won that match, so I'll take some confidence from there. He beat me five or six times before that, but I'll try to forget that.

I played one of the best matches I ever played in my life that match. I know it's possible.

Q. I know you talked earlier in the week about the weight loss. Have you been surprised by how much of an effect it's had on you? People must have mentioned it to you before. It can't be the first time somebody has said to lose some weight.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, like I said before, I've done some things this summer that I've never done before. I wasn't sure, you know, how I was gonna be as far as, you know, in the heat of the summer. I knew that I was really looking forward to this part of the year to see how I was gonna react, how my body was gonna react.

I knew I had, since September last year, had really put in a ton of work. I knew I could pretty much say, looking in the mirror, that I've done all I can do to put myself in this position and to be healthy and fit off the court, on the court.

So, you know, that in itself gives you a lot of confidence. You know, just being true to yourself. You know, sort of playing and leaving everything on the court, knowing that you've done everything you can possibly do. If this guy beats you, then that's too good.

Q. It looks like you're heading into seeding territory for the US Open. How important is that to your game and to your confidence.

MARDY FISH: Well, it was a goal of mine sort of after Newport. I was ranked right around 80 or 85 after Newport or right around Newport. It seemed like a tough goal, but that's what goals are. You've got to set 'em high and try to figure it out. Like I said, I think this puts me into the -- I would assume it puts me into the top 32 being 36 before the tournament. So it's great.

I mean, that being said, I could play someone and lose in the first round. I know how that works. I've played well here and gone into the US Open and lost in the second round a few times. So I won't take anything for granted.

Q. What are you most happy about in your game right now and what things do you really want to improve between now and the US Open?

MARDY FISH: I'm just excited for sort of -- I'm excited about a lot of things in my game. I'm excited about specifically for just the future of having these opportunities now that I've put myself in, and never been in this situation before, like I said.

What was your second part of your question?

Q. What do you want to improve on, specifics of your game.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, I mean, you just want to get better all the time. I would love to improve my first serve percentage. It's always been a key for me. Like you said, I win a high percentage. I think actually they keep stats for that. Shark would know.

But I think I'm first in first serve points won on tour, so that should tell you that you got to try to get it in a little bit more as well. Maybe that should help.

So that's big. And just continue to try to stay as healthy as I can. Like I said, it's a really

long year. Hopefully I have a few more years left.

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