

August 17, 2011



M. FISH/N. Davydenko

6-0, 6-2

An interview with:

MARDY FISH

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How are you feeling? You're going to be the top-rated American going into the US Open. Is that a lot of pressure to play in the United States being the top-rated American?

MARDY FISH: It's different from what I'm used to certainly, but I don't know. I don't know the answer to that because I've never done it. I would assume that there is a little bit more, though.

Q. And looking back, what has been your improvement over the last year or so that's brought you all the way to where you are?

MARDY FISH: It's the fitness, mental side. Fitness and mental side of the game that's changed quite a bit. You know, I can just do more things with my game.

And then figuring out, yes, I can do more things, but then how to incorporate those within everyday matches.

Q. I know you never expect things to be easy, but to start the tournament like that coming off Montréal, could you have asked for anything better?

MARDY FISH: No, it went great today. Obviously this is a guy that's beaten me twice before. We've you actually had pretty straightforward matches, whether it be wins or losses for both of us.

You know, this is a guy that you beat him 6-0 in a set and you know he's got that extra gear. You know he has that level. So you just have to

put that kind of set behind you and just treat it as just a regular set win and just go.

You know, he had a Love-30, he was up 1-0 in the second set, and you're not really sure if he's going to take it to the next level or not.

I was happy that he didn't.

Q. You ever leave the court wishing for a little more?

MARDY FISH: No. I've got a lot of matches in me now, so, no, definitely not.

Q. You talked last week about the importance of having belief in big matches.

MARDY FISH: Yep.

Q. Did you still get something from the final even though you lost it?

MARDY FISH: Yeah. I mean, you know, we got on the plane that night, and I was pretty comfortable with the fact that, you know, we were 2-All in the third for a Masters Series title.

Yeah, I mean, I put the myself in a position against a guy what has beaten everybody this year except for one match - and beaten a lot of players pretty convincingly, and a lot in straight sets.

That's a final clearly that he wants to win, so it's not like it's a first-round match where you catch him on a bad day. He's pretty comfortable there and pretty comfortable in those positions playing finals.

He's won five of those. You know, it's a very good position that I put myself in, and obviously disappointed to not win.

But it's hard to dwell on that. This is another tournament that's the exact same points and prize money and all that. I've had a lot of success here, so I can't think about last week at all.

Q. Davydenko is historically such a good returner of serve. He only had 9%, I think, service points returned.

MARDY FISH: Yep.

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Q. Was that you? Was that him? A combination?

MARDY FISH: I mean, I'm going to go with me and then try to let other people convince me otherwise, I guess, if you need to. (Smiling.)

Yeah, I was very confident out there on my serve and executed extremely well. Obviously very comfortable on this court.

Q. He won the toss and elected to serve, which is kind of like a football team with a great defense electing to put its offense on the field. Were you surprised by that?

MARDY FISH: To be honest, I actually was a little bit surprised. Sometimes those returners, they want to kind of get you -- you know, that first game is always tough to play for anybody, and I was happy to return first and kind of get my feet under me and kind of get going in the match.

You just never know how someone like that is going to come out. Obviously his results as of late haven't been up to par for him and haven't been the same results that he's had throughout his career pretty much. He was as high as 3 in the world.

Like I said, you just never know if that level going to be there. And maybe he is not as confident on his serve. Maybe he feels like he needs to try to get the momentum early in the match.

Q. Then you broke him at love.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, that was nice.

Q. Few years ago you would have been sort of the dangerous player in the early rounds; now you're the seed and expected to win. Talk about learning to handle the challenge of those early matches.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, it's very different. It's much harder to play when you're supposed to win. But there is also a reason why I'm 7 in the world now: It's because I've transformed and figured out a way to beat a lot of players. I figured out a way to be a really good player.

You know, I can impose my serve game - like today - and impose my return game on a lot of guys that hopefully makes 'em feel uncomfortable. I think makes 'em feel pretty uncomfortable.

It would be a tough scenario to play someone that serves and returns well. You just don't really feel -- I would feel like you wouldn't have much room for error. That's the goal.

Q. You said the other night that because of last week you could play a little more freely this week. What does that mean? You try new things?

MARDY FISH: Yeah, it's hard. Maybe it's a defense mechanism to try to convince myself that I don't have a lot of pressure this week. You know, in all reality, I do. I mean, I've got 600 points to defend this week; family and friends here; this is a place where I've been very successful and comfortable at throughout the years.

Look, Montréal took a lot pressure off me as far as my ranking is concerned, as far as being a top-10 player going into the US Open, which I've never done before.

So in that regard, it has taken a lot pressure off. I'll play here and hope to play a bunch of matches here, you know, feeling very comfortable out there on the grandstand and stadium court. Two of my favor courts in the whole world. I love those courts.

Hopefully that will help me just play a little more freely.

Q. Could you just briefly address what went into your decision to withdraw from Winston-Salem?

MARDY FISH: I feel like I need to put myself in the best position -- I've never gone into the Open like this before. I've never been a top-10 player in the world going into the biggest tournament of the year.

I've played quite a few matches this summer, and obviously I want to put myself in the best position to do well there. I certainly was looking forward to going there. North Carolina is one of my favorite places in the whole world, so hopefully I can make it up to 'em and go next year.

Q. Can you just talk about signing up to play every tournament in summer and what the thinking was.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, the thinking of that was -- I'll just answer that real quick -- knowing that I've had a lot of points to defend, having the pressure of doing that, having the pressure of trying to stay where I was, I thought it was going to be very hard to do what I did last year.

I played extremely well last year and had a lot of luck on my side and just beat a lot of really good players. So I just didn't assume it was going

to be like that. That's what went into there.

Q. Just changing topics slightly, it's going to be the tenth anniversary of September 11th. Talk about your memories of that day, where you were.

MARDY FISH: I was in Los Angeles actually at former players' house, Alex O'Brien. I was playing a challenger that week that got canceled because of that.

But I remember I woke up like probably 7:00 out there and everything had already gone down and happened. So it was sort of surreal trying catch up with everything what had been going on.

You know, not really knowing -- there were things happening all over the place, so you didn't know if something was going to happen on the west coast either. That was just off the top of my head.

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