

August 19, 2011



M. FISH/R. Nadal

6-3, 6-4

An interview with:

MARDY FISH

THE MODERATOR: Mardy will take a 4-3 lifetime record up against Murray tomorrow. Won the last three meetings. And also his fourth straight ATP World Tour semifinal or better, of course his third here in Cincinnati.

Questions?

Q. How were you able to succeed today where you had fallen short six previous times?

MARDY FISH: Confidence has a lot to do with it. Belief. And then I'm playing a lot better than I did before.

Q. You've now held serve 29 games.

MARDY FISH: I heard that. Thanks for the jinx.

Q. That sounds remarkable to us, but how do you frame it?

MARDY FISH: Taking advantage of the opportunities, making a lot first serves in key moments, not giving away many free points. Look, those three guys return extremely well, you know, so if I don't lose serve, I am usually pretty successful.

You know, I usually won't play a 7-6 in the third tight match if I don't lose serve, so -- unless I'm playing Isner.

Q. Given how well you've been playing the last year and a half, do you have any regrets or wonder what might have been had

you been able to make the same level of commitment eight years ago?

MARDY FISH: I mean, do you have any regrets at all?

Q. Sure.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, of course. I'm a human being so I have regrets. Certainly not figuring it out earlier, but I didn't. You know, I certainly don't lose sleep over it, but, yeah, I regret not being able to mature quicker than a lot of other people.

But I didn't.

Q. Is 29 the new 19?

MARDY FISH: I don't think I'll feel 19 tomorrow morning when I wake up, but, look, you only get better. You only get more and more experience, in my opinion.

Q. Can you describe the difference between thinking you can win and knowing you can?

MARDY FISH: I'll try. The difference, what I felt, was I played him at Wimbledon. I served the opening game. I lost serve in 45 seconds at 15, and wasn't unbelievably surprised. You know, I was like, Oh, not a good start kind of thing.

I was down 15-40 here and I felt like I left maybe one or two points out there in those four points. I felt like I wanted a better start than Wimbledon.

It's just that small belief that I really felt like I could win. Not that I wanted to win, I really felt like I could and maybe should win in that scenario.

That's best that I can do.

Q. When you broke at 3-2 in the second, what do you tell yourself to not get too far ahead of yourself given the magnitude of the situation, a possible first win against Nadal?

MARDY FISH: Helps that I played a lot of

big matches in the past couple weeks. If I had just been in that situation, you know, if that would have been the first time, I would have been really nervous.

I played a couple nervous points, but I was pretty happy with the way I executed. That first point or two in the last game was huge. I got a little lucky. I hit the top of the tape and maybe the side of the line on a defensive forehand crosscourt and maybe caught him off guard and he missed his slice out wide.

A little bit of luck and a little bit of belief as well.

Q. What message were you trying to send to the crowd with your gesture afterward?

MARDY FISH: It was a hug thing. Supposed to be a hug. Something that I've done. I saw Jonas Bjorkman do it at Wimbledon a long time ago, and I thought that that was a pretty special moment for him. I clearly copied off him. I've done it here a few times.

I had unbelievable crowd support, and I felt it and I wanted to show it.

Q. Where does this win rank for you? Top 5?

MARDY FISH: Yeah, probably. Probably. You know, he's a big, huge hurdle. He's going to go down as one of the best players ever, and it would be pretty cool to tell my kids one day that I beat Rafael Nadal.

I beat Roger Federer as well in Indian Wells. And it's just not the first round of an event either. It was a big match for both of us.

Bunch of Davis Cup wins too that will probably be higher. But it's up there (smiling.)

Q. First serve percentage was 53%. Is that something you're going to have to improve to beat Murray tomorrow?

MARDY FISH: I didn't necessarily feel that I served at a low percentage. I served very well when I needed to. If you look at maybe the big points or the most important points, what percentage I served at there, I bet it was pretty high.

So I don't necessarily look at that and say that I served poorly. I served very well at key moments.

Q. Does the timing of this win change a little bit now that you've been in the top 10 for a little while and finally got the big win?

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MARDY FISH: Ah, just means I'm a better player than I've been. I think Wimbledon was the first time I had played him since my knee surgery, so it's a little different look for him as well. I'm a different player.

Q. You said on the television interview that you felt the win cemented your position in the top 10. Did you feel a little bit that some people look at it and say, Oh, he's had a good run rather than taking you as a top-10 player?

MARDY FISH: Yeah, and I would like to stay in the top 10 for a long time. I'll ride it as long as I can.

But I didn't have that one big win since I've been there. My last big win was probably, you know, maybe Murray here last year. That was my last I think top 5 win. So it would be a while to beat really a top player.

I played a great match against Berdych at Wimbledon as well in the fourth round. This one is bigger than that.

Q. You're at a career high 7 this week. What do you think the key is to be able to stay consistent, to stay in the top 10 for the rest of year and also years to come?

MARDY FISH: It helps to take advantage of your opportunities, play well on the surfaces that you're comfortable on and that suit your game best. You know, I'm not going to pick up a thousand points in the clay court season. Pretty well aware of that.

So I've got to take advantage of tournaments like Wimbledon, like a court in Montréal last week, and a court here and a court at the Open. Those are all great opportunities for me wherever I'm ranked.

You know, London is the goal for sure for me. Just to get there one time would be very special.

Q. You're a real fan favorite here now. Is that something you're aware of during a match like this?

MARDY FISH: Yeah.

Q. Or you're so focused that it's not...

MARDY FISH: No, I can feel it. That's what we talked about before, just showing my appreciation. This is a very special place for me. I've played very well and had great memories over

the years.

I'll never forget the crowd support last year in the final against Roger. They respect what he's done and does on the court for sure, but I felt like they wanted me to win.

And I felt like it was the same today.

Q. Talk about the US Open Series win that you just completed. What does it mean to you?

MARDY FISH: Means a ton. Yeah, feels like a tournament win really. I think it's the epitome of what the US Open Series is, and that it's not just coming over and playing two events and the US Open. It's grinding it out all summer and playing well throughout the summer.

Whoever wins here or if Novak wins here, I think it's 100 points and 100 points for him. I still got a nice cushion, even if I lose tomorrow and he wins the tournament. So it doesn't necessarily feel like a fluke. I've played well. It's an honor.

Q. How does Rafa's day yesterday factor into today? Did you want to win the first set more than normal?

MARDY FISH: Not really more than normal. I have to -- you know, you got to get up on a guy like that.

But you have to ask him that. I don't know how he felt. I'm sure he didn't feel great this morning, especially going out and playing doubles last night. I was pretty surprised by that.

So, yeah, it was a good opportunity for me, I mean, to catch him on a place where maybe he's not as confident as previous matches or tournaments. You know, he lost in his first match last week, so it was just a great opportunity.

Glad I took advantage.

Q. You've made it to the final four in Masters events several times before in your career, but have yet to win one. Is there anything different you have to do to break through, and what would breaking through mean?

MARDY FISH: It helps to put yourself in these positions a lot. I feel like -- you know, I still have a long way to go. Murray and probably Djokovic or Federer, everyone is in the top 10 that's left.

So it's a long ways to go. I feel like I have as good a chance as anyone.

Q. You talked about being able to play better on your serve like in key moments. Was that the key moment to beating Nadal? You won 73% of your service points coming into the game.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, got to be aggressive. I have to take the patterns, try to get to the patterns that help me the most: crosscourt forehand; my crosscourt to his backhand was the best pattern of mine that I felt was going to be the most successful. So I tried that.

He tried to get out of it as well. I felt that. The game in the second set I no longer found myself in those rallies. Credit to him for trying to change things up.

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