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**Western & Southern
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MASTERS & WOMEN'S OPEN

J. ISNER/T. Haas

7-6, 5-7, 7-6

An interview with:

JOHN ISNER

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Relieved to get through that match? Long one.

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I didn't have much energy out there. I didn't feel great. Luckily I served well and I played the big points well.

I was really fortunate to get through that. I'm gonna have to rest up bigtime for tomorrow.

Q. Were you struggling a little bit with your fitness?

JOHN ISNER: No, I don't know what -- I've gotten on my fitness level up to a pretty good level. I know it needs to get better. I was kind of unusually fatigued out there. I don't know what it was.

Q. Some big serving in the breaker. You hit that forehand drop volley. Talk about that a little bit.

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I think that was the only point I didn't make a first serve. And, you know, I guess he didn't really hit that great of a pass, so he kind of hit it to me. I like hitting that shot a lot. So it was there for me, and I hit it.

Q. Were you happy with the way you returned? Served? Footwork?

JOHN ISNER: I was happy with the way I served. I thought he served really well, too. I mean, I felt like every time he made a first serve he was hitting his spot. His first serve, I'd get it back

winner. The whole match that's what it was. I need to return better, that's for sure, if I want to do anything here.

Those are the kind of matches that I need to get through. Hopefully I'll play better tomorrow.

Q. How do you feel about this season? You were playing a few challengers, couple in April and June, and now you're sort of at a career high. Seems like it's been a little bit topsy-turvy, but going in the right direction.

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I got sick right at the wrong time. Right before the French Open. I was in there. So I had to take a month off completely and couldn't do anything. Came back, and my first tournament was a challenger.

Q. Was it mono?

JOHN ISNER: Yes. My first tournament was a challenger, and I lost first round. Played terrible, but I didn't expect to play well. Kind of played like an exhibition tournament on clay after that and won it.

So I got some matches under my belt, and then I went to Indianapolis, and I been playing and winning matches ever since.

Q. What's been clicking for you?

JOHN ISNER: I think mainly it's my demeanor on court. Not wasting much emotional energy out there. I'm staying calm. I didn't feel nervous at all at any point tonight.

I was just playing the big points well and just staying calm and relaxed, and I think that's helped me out a lot.

Q. Is that something you've been working on with Craig?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, it's not something you can work on. It's something he tells me. Sometimes you kind of just get in a little bit of a zone. I'm in a good place mentally. I'm not letting bad shots frustrate me, and I'm not getting too emotionally high or low.

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J. Isner - 08.18.09.doc

Q. Do you ever get nervous in third set tiebreakers, or have you played so many that...

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, you do. You get nervous. I was pretty tired out there, so I was just -- if I lost, I lost. I wasn't gonna sweat it that much. So, you know, he probably outplayed me tonight.

Q. You both had really high winners to unforced errors ratios. Is it frustrating to play a guy like that because you can't get the momentum? It's like, shot, winner, shot, winner.

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I don't know what the stats are. Yeah, it is. It's tough to get into the points. I mean, when he was -- he didn't serve necessarily really hard, but he was hitting his spots really well.

Like I said, he was hitting a lot of first ball winners off my return. Felt like I made a lot returns. He didn't give me much to work with, especially in the last few sets. I mean, I was never able to get like a Love-30. He wasn't really throwing in like a double fault here and there and a 30-All point.

It was just kind of -- he stayed steady the whole match and played well.

Q. Going into the match, what were you trying to attack most? Going for his backhand, forward? What was the strategy going in?

JOHN ISNER: I think the strategy is his backhand is really good. I wanted to -- on my backhand, I wanted to kind of pound the middle more. I didn't want to give him that much angle. I don't know if I did that that well.

But if I got into a forehand to forehand with him, I wanted to stick with that. I think his backhand is a little bit better than his forehand.

Any chance I could get, just kind of come to the net. I think I did that really well in the last set tiebreaker, and I probably should have done that, implemented that play more, you know, during the course of the match.

Q. Any concerns about the next match with this obviously taking a lot out of you and playing an unfamiliar opponent?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I mean, I hope I get a good night's sleep, hydrate really well, and get out on the court and get a sweat going like I did tonight. Went through nine shirts, so hopefully I can keep that number down.

You know, if I get into the match and get my feet wet a little bit out there the adrenaline will take over, and hopefully this playing so late won't affect me.

Q. You've beat Tsonga and taken Roddick to 7-5 in the third. Haas is one of the best players on tour this summer. Do you feel like going into a match against anyone you have a pretty good chance?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I do. Especially with my serve, because I'm gonna hold serve a lot. So I'm not -- you know, I'm not really worried no matter who I play, who's across the net. I feel like I'm gonna keep it close, more so than other guys that don't have my serve.

That's gonna give me some free points. It's just a matter of me tidying up other parts of my game, and I think really I have a high ceiling. I'm with the right coach and I know I'm working on the right things.

Q. You and Sam sort of came on tour at the same time.

JOHN ISNER: Yeah.

Q. Sort of feel like you guys have been making steady progress and waiting for a big result in a major event. Do you feel like that, that you guys are sort of primed to make a big splash?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I mean, this tournament here is huge. Obviously this is -- this isn't any tougher than any Grand Slam because the field is a little bit smaller. The matchups here are insane.

So hopefully this is the tournament. I know Querrey plays Roddick tomorrow night. He played -- he was in up a break twice on Roddick in D.C., and he let it slip away. I don't know if he thought he could win. I know he's looking forward to that match tomorrow night. That could be kind of a break out for him.

Obviously US Open I want to do well. I think we're we both -- we both won a lot of the matches prior to that tournament, so I think we're in good form.

Q. It's like you're coming up and sort of feels like Mardy and James have been slipping a little bit and you guys are on the way up.

JOHN ISNER: I don't really want to say

they're slipping. They've been unfortunate with injuries. James stubbed his toe on his bag in Europe and broke his toe. That's just a freak accident.

Mardy has a cracked rib right now. Those guys are -- they may seem a little bit older, but they're not old. James is 29 and Mardy is 27, 28. They got a lot of years left in 'em.

I just want to kind of get up to -- I think I'm the fifth highest American right now. James, Sam, and Mardy are all in the 20s. I want to get up to that level first and foremost, and then try to keep climbing from there.

Q. What goals do you have for the rest of the year?

JOHN ISNER: Well, my goal is to be top 50 at the end of year. I think that's very attainable. I don't have much coming off, and I got a lot of tournaments that I'll be main draw at, indoor tournaments over in Asia and Europe. So those tournaments are huge for me.

I want to do well at the Open. I lost five straight Grand Slam first rounds. Want to kind of buck that trend.

So, yeah, I mean, just -- like I said, I only set myself the top 50 goal. Wherever I go from there is added bonus.

Q. You mentioned Tommy Haas hit his spots in the box serving. Are you serving more for placement now, or how is your philosophy of serving changed?

JOHN ISNER: No, I don't think -- you know, obviously you want to hit your spot. That's what you go for. I did that well tonight, especially on the ad side. My favorite serve is the big one out wide on the ad. I know I hit the one on the T really well tonight. I was hitting my spots there.

Yeah, and I guess you could say on the ones where I want to do out wide on the deuce, you want to take a little bit off and give yourself a little margin. I've been working on that.

Q. What else has Craig brought to your game, would you say?

JOHN ISNER: Everything. He's helped out my net play, helped out my backhand. You know, along with him and the guys I work with down in Florida, I've gotten stronger.

I kind of got a little bit -- this past off-season and November, December I wasn't able to work-out. I was hurt. I had like a hip thing. I couldn't really do anything for like a month.

I wasn't able to really get as fit as I wanted to be, and then I got mono. I'm really looking forward to the off-season this year. If I can get more fit and be in -- so I could be really strong and deep in third sets and maybe four- or five-set matches, I think that's gonna help.

Q. Fitness and movement probably the areas you need to improve most?

JOHN ISNER: Yeah, I think I spend a lot time in the weight room. Sometimes four, five days a week. We're gonna maybe cut that down a little bit and more time on the field. I train in the right places. It's gonna be hot and humid in Florida in December. Get my fitness level up there.

Q. I know you're a big sports fan. When you had mono, did you watch French Open and Wimbledon and stuff like that?

JOHN ISNER: No, I didn't. I would check to see how guys like James and Sam, my friends did, but I've never really watched tennis. So I was able to -- only good thing about not going to Europe I was able to watch the playoffs, NHL and NBA. Sat my butt on the couch and watched TV.

Q. Who are your favorite teams?

JOHN ISNER: Panthers and Hurricanes, and obviously Georgia football.

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