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**Western & Southern
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MASTERS & WOMEN'S OPEN

R. NADAL/A. Seppi

7-6, 7-6

An interview with:

RAFAEL NADAL

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. First game of the match you broke after Seppi hit a lob and you had to sprint. Is the knee okay?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, the knee was good.

Q. I noticed you weren't wearing a brace like you normally do.

RAFAEL NADAL: I didn't have the band, the tape, for a long time, no? In Monte-Carlo I didn't play with tape, but I didn't play with tape because the problem is not in that position of the knee, no? The problem is in the top of the knee.

Q. Do you feel that you're getting better with each match at the moment? Do you feel better on the court?

RAFAEL NADAL: Here the ball is fast and the ball is not getting bit topspin, so it's tough. It's difficult conditions for me, no? My results here in this tournament say that. It's not easy tournament for me. My best result was last year semifinals. Always difficult for me to play a good tournament here.

But, you know, I don't know if I play very well, but I was there all the time, no? I was fighting every point, and that's the important thing, no? I don't know if it was a very good match for me, but it was very important, because these matches help me a lot to get my best performance and to get physical training, too.

So everything is positive. And, you know, the most positive thing I gonna be tomorrow another time on the court. That's important for continuing improve.

Q. I would like you to talk about your serve today. It worked well and you saved nine breakpoints from ten in the match. You had eight aces. Is that what you've been working on lately?

RAFAEL NADAL: The true is I didn't work a lot with the serve these days, no, because I had the problem in the abdominals. So it was all inspiration. (Laughter.)

No, no, sure, the serve is very important part of the game. If you are serving well, you can play the rest of the match with more calm, no? So it's important.

Today it was important. In important moments I had good serves. I had three aces in breakpoints, so that's ver good news and very happy for that.

I have to improve always my serve, but I have to continuing serving like this if I want to have chances to win tomorrow.

Q. When you say the knees are good, are you saying they don't hurt at all?

RAFAEL NADAL: Always perfect is impossible, no? But when I say it's good, I can play with no problem, no?

Q. Did this match tell you things about your physical condition, the state of your game, that the last two days of practice did not?

RAFAEL NADAL: You know, the match is always different than practice, so I played better than I practice.

But I must play better tomorrow. That's the true.

Q. The match was a very close one that turned on just a few points in both sets. Did he

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just play extremely well, or is that just the proof of how competitive the game is becoming?

RAFAEL NADAL: In this level there's no easy matches. All the matches are in a few points. We are playing the top 50 players of the world here. You can't win an easy match, especially in this fast court, no? So that's normal.

Sure, probably I am not playing, that's true, my best tennis. But if I play my best tennis, the match never gonna be easy against Seppi, too.

Q. Given the injury layoff, what goals do you have for the end of the year? Do you have a year-end ranking goal that you want to hit?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, the goal right now is improve every day. That's the goal, no? In one week and a half we have important tournament. You know, we have US Open, so maybe that's the -- the first goal is try and improve my tennis here a little bit more, and the second goal is try to be as better as possible in the US Open.

Q. When you say your goal is to get better, are you talking about the pain or your timing? In what way do you need to get better?

RAFAEL NADAL: When I talking about the goals, right now I'm talking about the tennis, not the knees and not that, because I hope to be okay.

Q. To be successful on hardcourt, do you need to play a more aggressive style of tennis? Do the tactics need to be the most aggressive?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, well, that's true. When I have the very good results on hardcourt I played really aggressive. I played big shots with the forehand and big shots with the backhand and playing inside the court.

But you can play inside the court when you have a good feeling. If you don't have a good feeling, it's difficult to go inside the court, no?

Q. I'm curious about what you're saying. Do you have to be entirely 100% confident in your movement and your strokes in order to play aggressive?

RAFAEL NADAL: I think I am okay in my movements. Sure, I have to improve a little bit more, because that's -- in one week is not enough to be a 100%. But I feel okay in my move.

But after feeling okay of my move, I need a little more time to adapt the speed of the ball and to get confidence. Winning matches like today is the only way to take this confidence, no?

So that's it. To be confidence and playing inside the court, I need to be in the back on the court running before.

Q. Do you think you moved well today?

RAFAEL NADAL: I can move better. I think I moved better than what I touch the ball.

Q. Do you think there's a favorite for the US Open right now, or a group of favorites? How many guys do you think have a chance of winning the Open?

RAFAEL NADAL: If I am?

Q. You or anyone. Is there a specific favorite right now, would you say?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, favorites, when one player won the last five years he's the favorite, no? But, yeah, he's favorite.

But a lot of players are coming well, no? Roddick is playing really well. Murray is doing really well. Djokovic always have his chances. He's a good player. And I hope myself. Del Potro, too.

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