

June 12, 2008



R. NADAL/K. Nishikori

6-4, 3-6, 6-3

An interview with:

RAFAEL NADAL

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Rafa.

Q. He gave you a good match, didn't he?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, tough match. No, he played well. I didn't play my best match, but I fight, no? I tried my best all the match. I served well, I think. Was my best shot today.

And, well, probably in the third set I start returning a little bit better, no?

Q. How did you find the court? Seemed to be slippery today.

RAFAEL NADAL: Tough. A little bit dangerous today, yes. But nothing to do (smiling).

Q. Murray was saying the same. He felt as though the conditions were a little risky, treacherous, especially the back of the court. Did you think that was the case, Rafa?

RAFAEL NADAL: I felt when I am running, I can't stop. Because I felt every time, if I stop, I gonna go. So when I am running to the forehand, to the backhand, I have to continuing two more steps. So that for my game is very difficult, no, because I need have a powerful push because I have a lot of acceleration with the arm. So I need have confidence with the legs.

And here I didn't. I didn't feel with this confidence today.

Q. You skidded under the net at one point. Has that ever happened to you before?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yes (smiling). You don't remember because I don't know if you see, but one very, very important point against Federer, the final of Roland Garros 2006, 5-4, serving for the match in the fourth, 30-15, he give me a dropshot and I touch the net. And this year against Potito Starace, in the tiebreak on Hamburg, 5-5.

Q. But your feet didn't go under the net.

RAFAEL NADAL: It was different. The other time was with the head. Here was more tough because I won the point. I won the point. I was have easy volley. Well, finally I won, so that's the most important thing.

Q. Did you recognize in his playing a little bit of yourself at 18 years old?

RAFAEL NADAL: No, so different. Well, he is very, very good. He gonna be top 10 for sure, top 5. I am hundred percent sure, no. He play very easy. Very talented player. When he has a little bit time with the forehand, he kill you every time.

We will see when the years come back, is coming. He needs for sure improve a little bit things. But he has a very good potential, no?

Q. What are the strengths, the good things in his game?

RAFAEL NADAL: I think he play very easy. He can read the game very well. He has good movement. When he has the chance, he go inside with the forehand. Amazing backhand when he's running. So every time, very good cross, down the line. I think he's gonna be very good.

Q. Is playing Karlovic on grass something to look forward to or something to

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think that it's a horrible prospect, the huge serve all the time on a grass court?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well...

Q. Not fun?

RAFAEL NADAL: No. I don't think going to be the more funny match tomorrow, no?

Anyway, you know, you have to serve very well. You have to be hundred percent playing well with your serve and later wait, wait. If you have a chance, try to have the chance.

Q. What does Nishikori have to work on?

RAFAEL NADAL: Just I think with the time, one more year, that's it. For the rest, I think he has everything.

Q. How is your body reacting going from clay to grass?

RAFAEL NADAL: Well, difficult the first days always, no? You have to play more low.

Q. Down to your knees?

RAFAEL NADAL: Yeah, a little bit, the beginning, the knees are surfing a little bit. And the back, too. But, you know, I have one more week before Wimbledon. Very happy because I played already two matches, one three-sets matches, and tomorrow I gonna have another match. So is a good preparation for Wimbledon.

Q. Kind of a dumb question. On Tuesday for your doubles match, you were wearing a short-sleeved shirt and shorts. What happened?

RAFAEL NADAL: The doubles? Well, my partner didn't have the green T-shirt and I don't have another T-shirt white. That's the reason what I play like this.

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