

29 February 2012



R. FEDERER/F. Lopez

7-5, 6-3

An interview with:

ROGER FEDERER

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You happy with that?

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah. It was difficult, you know. I mean, I obviously played Feliciano many, many times way back when - and now on tour as well - but I've never played him when he was ranked so high and potentially so confident.

Obviously I should have lost I guess the match in Madrid last year, you know. It was tough getting use to his serve early on. I wasn't having many looks. He was serving aces left and right.

I just, you know, tried to focus on my serve, made sure from that end I wasn't doing any stupid stuff, and at the end I got a bit of a read on his serve. At the end of the set, had some chances and eventually was able to come through, even though I had chances at 5-4 and I think four set points.

So makes it hard against him because he always gets the break points on his favorite side. With his lefty swinger, it obviously makes it extremely difficult, especially with the one hand.

But I found a way and stayed calm and came thorough. Those are the kind of matches, you know, you need early on in a tournament to feel good about, you know, how you're handling those tough moments.

Q. You say you focused on what you did. But now the match is over, do you think he's the kind of player that once he gets ahead, with that dangerous attacking game he could have played even better?

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah. I mean, doesn't matter what the scoreline is. If all of a sudden he's up a break, that could mean that's the set, you know. He might serve a little less

good when it's close in the score, maybe 5-All, deuce, all those things. I mean, it's never an easy situation.

But even then he needs to rely even more on his first serves and so forth. Really puts the pressure on him as well. But then obviously if he's ahead and he gets 30-Love starts in all his service games, I mean, then he can hit any spot; he can take maybe a little off his first serve, make more first serve percentage; can maybe come to the net a bit more even and really increase a lot of the pressure.

That's why after I missed that smash I think in the first point of the second set, you know, even then I was already thinking, Hmm, break down. We're already going to the third set. That was only the first point of the second set, so you can imagine my mindset out there.

Q. Do you have a preference for night play or day play? You've played twice now in the 7:00 spot. Is that what you would prefer?

ROGER FEDERER: I mean, looking ahead potentially, you know, at Indian Wells you get the occasional night match; Miami you get the occasional night match.

Look, it's good getting some night matches again. You know, just you do play those a little less frequently than the day sessions.

Just overall obviously on clay, on grass, there is only almost day sessions. That's why it's kind of good getting used to those. It's tough then to switch then going from night to day, night to day.

That's why I'm happy I played twice in a row in the night session slot. I don't know yet what I'm playing tomorrow. So we'll see.

Q. Everyone is saying that has played during the day in the sun is very, very fast conditions.

ROGER FEDERER: Well, yeah. I mean, it's fast at night, but I practice here all the time in Dubai, and mostly during the day. It definitely flies a lot during the day.

So it's tough conditions out there. The ball flies. The moment you don't hit it perfect it floats out beyond the baseline. It's difficult to control.

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Q. The tournament doesn't have the first-round bye and also has a Saturday final. How big is that difference in terms of the rhythm, preparation, concentration?

ROGER FEDERER: I mean, you know it going into it, so -- we don't get byes at every event, you know. But I guess sometimes it's almost a disadvantage getting a bye just because the other guys have played one match already.

So in Rotterdam it was the same thing. We all played the same amount of rounds to win the tournament - except me at Rotterdam because I got a walkover in the second round.

But the Saturday final does change it up a bit. And obviously playing on Tuesday and then playing five in a row, that's sort of unusual. Let's say in Basel I play Monday, Wednesday, Friday if I won; here I play Tuesday and I play every day.

So that's a change. Tomorrow it's my third match into the tournament, and I hope I'll pull up okay tomorrow and then, you know, come through again to hopefully to back it up in the semis. We'll see how it goes.

But the focus is obviously now is on Youzhny. It's a tough tournament to win because of those conditions I just said and the draw obviously. So many top players around that it's difficult to win.

Q. What advantage do left handers have in matches?

ROGER FEDERER: I think mostly the ad side, having to make and face break points on the ad side. I think that's the big advantage for the left handers.

Q. Talk to us about Youzhny. He does really well here. How do you approach that?

ROGER FEDERER: I think I've played him in the semis here before. I think he's an extremely good player. He was in the top 10, semis of the US Open, and I've had my fair share of tough matches with him over the years.

He's very talented. I had a very difficult match with him at Wimbledon actually where I thought we played some great tennis. I was able to come through in a tough four setter over there, so...

I was actually supposed to play him in Rotterdam and he gave me a walkover because of a knee or toe issue, I'm not sure, that he got from Davis Cup.

He's got one the best one-handed backhands in the game and reads the plays well;

has got a good slice and has good control. In quick conditions like this, if you have good control makes it a tough opponent to play against.

Q. When you have played on the quicker hardcourts, do you intentionally make some adjustment like move in more than the slower hard court?

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah. I mean, sure. You have to change many things, because on the slower court you can rely more on just maybe trying to put the ball in play and then rallying a of couple times and then waiting for the right shot to pull a trigger.

On a quick court, it's only usually the first three shots of point that decide the outcome of it. So it's a different mindset totally. Then obviously you get more free points, but when the other guy picks the right side and he clocks the return, it comes back much faster and it's hard to half-volley, which on a slow court is almost no problem, to be honest, these days with the strings and the balls and the court speed.

So that changes. That just makes things -- you know, you play with a different mindset, and that changes everything really.

Q. How much adjustment do you have to make from Llodra and Lopez to Youzhny in the next round? He's more of a baseline player.

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, there will maybe be some slice duels and some maneuvering around and maybe more feel. Even though Lopez and Llodra have great feel as well, they do it more at the net than from the baseline. He's very smooth.

So it's an adjustment. Ever since I arrived in Dubai I've only practiced with left handers, so this is going to maybe be a slight adjustment.

But honestly, I play 80% of time righties, so this is going to feel more easy moving from a lefty back to a righty than going from a righty to a lefty, to be honest.

Q. There have been times you went against Youzhny, so what do you think of the next one? It will be 12th time you are meeting.

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, I mean, we've had some tough matches. Look, he should've won a couple against me for sure. Somehow maybe I was on that streak that I was just winning everything for a while there where luck was on my side and stuff.

But, sure, it's good going into a match with such a head to head. Normally I do not care about head to heads. The moment when someone has beaten me five times or I've beaten him five times you sort of know how to play that opponent, so...

But obviously if you go into a match that you have such a great head to head, sort of try to take advantage of it and get off to a good start in the match and hopefully roll as you did the previous times against him.

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