

**27 February 2012**



**M. FISH/A. Beck**

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An interview with:

## **MARDY FISH**

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

### **Q. Pretty good debut.**

MARDY FISH: Yeah, obviously it's nice to get through quickly early in the tournaments, but it gets tough from here on out for sure. I've never played him before. I assume he's played better matches for sure.

But these courts suit me very well. So I'll get back out on the practice court tomorrow and try to fix a couple things, fix the serve a little bit.

Again, yeah, it's great to be playing here. Very, very happy with the court surface and the way that it plays.

### **Q. The last time you played someone you hadn't played before it was a bit of a shock for you, wasn't it?**

MARDY FISH: Yeah. That guy, I was frightened at time with his serve that I played last week. He hit me with a couple serves, and that guy had the hardest, the fastest serve that I've ever played against.

I had been sick in bed for a week and actually postponed my trip a couple days going over because I couldn't fly because I had a nasty cold.

I would have liked better preparation. Playing someone like him and his style last week was not ideal.

### **Q. He had a bigger serve than Karlovic or...**

MARDY FISH: Yeah, faster. Those guys have a tougher serve because it's at a different angle where the ball comes in. But without a doubt, it's faster than theirs. Fastest serve I've ever played -- I mean, he almost broke my left wrist on the first second serve he hit at 240 K. On a second serve, so...

**Q. An awful a lot of players, like Roger Federer, for example say that the first rounds are tricky because of the court surface, the fact that it is so quick. You though from the very start say that you like these courts and they suit your game.**

MARDY FISH: Yeah, I love 'em.

**Q. If people are going to extoll the negatives about the court surface, what are the positives for you?**

MARDY FISH: Well, it's nice have to at least a tournament or two that's a quicker surface on the tour these days. They've slowed everything down. They've slowed Wimbledon down; they've slowed the US Open down.

And so it's nice have to have a -- Montréal was the fastest surface of the year last year. Cincinnati is usually relatively quick. A lot of that has to do with the weather as well.

But this court is quick. It's playing fast, especially during the day. And it's nice to just get that sort of variety a little bit. We've lost the variety, no doubt about it. There are hardly any faster-surface tournaments anymore. There should be a couple more at least.

I'm glad it's here and I'm glad I'm here.

**Q. Has being here in any way altered any preconceptions you might have had coming here to the Middle East, or did you come with an open mind?**

MARDY FISH: No, yeah, very open mind. I asked a lot of friends and tennis players and golfers that come over, friends of mine, and everyone has said they loved it. Everyone is super nice here, and every hotel is like a resort.

It's a pretty nice part of the world. It's far away from home. Feels like it's far way from home for sure. But I don't have to move here. I'm just going to spend a week and a half hopefully here.

We've enjoyed our time for sure.

**Q. Did you manage to speak to Andy about it?**

MARDY FISH: I did. Yeah, he was one of the first ones I asked. Obviously he had a good time.

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**Q. About the match today, what was working so well? You jumped out early and you never really seemed to be in any trouble at all.**

MARDY FISH: Yeah, I returned well. I had one shaky moment there in the second set to keep my ground and keep the momentum on my side.

But I returned well. He's kind of got a tricky lefty serve, and sometimes those guys can take the racquet out of your hand.

So, you know, sometimes you feel like when you play a match like that you could do some things better, but obviously overall you're pretty happy with the result.

**Q. Does it feel at all different to be the U.S. No. 1 or not?**

MARDY FISH: Well, it's been a little while now. It feels like -- and it certainly is different than my past being the third or fourth or tenth American at times. There is not nearly as much pressure.

And comes a responsibility with it as well. You know, that's where the match that I played last week in Marseilles, it bugs you a lot more than it used to because you don't want those guys to have that over you. You don't want those guys to beat you. You don't want to give players and your colleagues the idea that you're vulnerable as well.

So, you know, like I said, it's a good problem to have. Comes a high responsibility for sure. And then it gives you a lot more respect as well for someone like Andy who has had the title for so long and has done so well with the pressure.

**Q. Apart from Davis Cup, hasn't been the best of years for you. Has part of that been that pressure? Have you been feeling that pressure as the top American?**

MARDY FISH? No, doesn't feel any different than, say, the summer last year in the States. Obviously going through there, and I handled it pretty well there.

But it's a good pressure. It's not a bad thing. You know, you're playing on big courts and you're playing in front of lots of fans and gaining new fans and respect among players and friends.

No, I haven't had the best start to the year individually, but I must say Davis Cup in Switzerland certainly made up for the disappointment in Australia. There's no doubt about that.

Winning that tie and being a part of that with the guys, with Captain Courier, certainly doesn't feel like a bad start. Davis Cup is a huge priority of mine.

**Q. Just going back to the slower-faster surfaces, there has been an awful lot conjecture about men's tennis in the past being about big first serves, Olivetti, Raonic. Is part of the reason they're slowing it down to avoid that perception?**

MARDY FISH: Yeah, I don't know the answer to that. Certainly that's probably a factor. They've done a very good job of that.

But those guys serve so big that they can play through it. Some of those surfaces don't matter.

Isner, Karlovic, Raonic, these guys are unique servers. There's not many of them out there. You don't have to worry about those guys on a daily basis.

But it just brings upon the level of fitness is much higher now. The level of consistency and having to be healthy week in, week out throughout the year. That's one of the reasons why I was able to make the World Tour Final was just because I was healthy for every slam for the most part, except for the beginning of last year.

You know, when they slow them down there are other factors as well. You know, a guy that may not be as fit but has a bigger or faster game on a faster surface may get away with it.

But you can't get away with it on slower courts, so you got to be much more fit. So it goes both ways.

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