



Guest

Roger Federer is somebody who needs no introduction. While, Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal have overtaken him in terms of the overall Grand Slams won, when there is a discussion about the Greatest of All Time (GOAT), all fingers very often still point to Roger. One could attribute that to his fluidity, his charm on and off court, his longevity, his stable family life, and much more.

I had a unique opportunity to engage with Christopher Clarey, a veteran New York Times Correspondent who has been covering Sports at an Elite level for more than 30 years. From Bjorn Borg to Serena Williams. He has recently published the book - The Master: The Brilliant Career of Roger Federer. He gives us a behind the scenes account of Roger's journey starting from his childhood.

We speak about how Roger handled his mental chatter, how he made choices that made him play a long innings, how he handled stress, the role of his parents in shaping his character, how his skills as a businessman are probably better than his skills on the court. We hope you enjoy the 100th episode.

Context to the conversation

Welcome to 100th conversation at the Play to Potential Podcast, a series of reflective conversations on Leadership, Transitions, Careers and Life.

If you have been following the podcast, you know that this is a labor of love of mine and first and foremost, it is a space where I get to learn and grow from some of the conversations with these leading minds. We are also possibly the only podcast in the world, where we slice the conversation into smaller pieces of content that we call nuggets, cross reference the insight to something that might have been said in a different conversation and curate all that using tags that make the content easy to navigate. While you may not be able to see that when you consume the podcast on Apple or Spotify, if you went to playtopotential.com and saw the Curated Playlists section, you will see the nuggets organized by theme. Thank you for your support and love over the years and look forward to having you as part of the journey where I explore these themes further in the years to come.

While podcasting accounts for 10-20% of my time and effort, my primary vocation is that of an Executive Coach and a Discreet Sounding Board with CEOs/Entrepreneurs. I engage with leaders and organizations with a growth mindset and help them play to their unique potential. You can learn more about the podcast and my work at www.playtopotential.com.

Given this is the 100th episode, we wanted to mark it with something special. We have Christopher Clarey of the New York Times, who has written the book The Master – The Brilliant Career of Roger Federer. Chris has covered global Sports for the New York Times for more than 30 years. He is one of the world's leading authorities on tennis and has reported from more than 100 Grand Slam

tournaments, chronicling the major figures and issues of the Open era and interviewing everyone from Bjorn Borg to Serena Williams.

Now, the numbers might say that Novak and Rafa have 22 each and are still in the game. But for me Roger is still the person, I personally consider as the Greatest of All Time. It's hard to put a finger on what it is about him that really makes him so special for me. Whether it is the footwork of a ballet dancer, or the smoothness of the one-handed backhand, the naughtiness of a SABR (which he even branded as Sneaky Attack by Roger), his humor and charm during on-court interviews or him breaking down with Nadal during the last game at the Laver Cup. I guess its some combinations of the factors and much more.

Talking to Chris Clarey was the closest I could get to having a peek into Roger's life. Hope you like this episode.

Without further ado let's dive into the conversation with Chris Clarey!

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Chris, thanks so much for making the time, really excited to have you at the Play to Potential Podcast.

Christopher Clarey (CC): Hey, it is my pleasure. I am really delighted to join you and I appreciate the interest.

DJ: Lovely, and maybe just to kick things off, how is the book doing, what has been the reception?

CC: Deepak, it has been really gratifying. It has been a bestseller on the national level in six different countries and it has sold over 100,000 copies around the world so far in its year of existence, came out in paperback in the US and the UK. And it has just been a full tribute to Roger's reach, not my writing, but Roger's reach, and it came out at a very good time as well. I mean nobody was wishing Roger any ill fortune but the fact that he did not play much when the book was released and then ended up retiring a year later, the timing that the people who are in a nostalgic mood have wanted to read about Roger's path and his journey. And most interesting thing for me really has been how many young people have connected with it because they really did not know Roger's whole story, they did not know his whole evolution. And that is when my most interesting conversations have been with people that are sort of 35 and younger, they talk about just how they had no idea Roger was never anything but this elegant gentleman on court who had a perfect comportment and always was angel and beautiful leader. And really, if you read his book and know his story, you realize that it was not always like that. So that has been interesting to share that and see that land and resonate with the new audience.

DJ: Fascinating. And maybe in terms of context Chris, if you want to give the listeners a sense of your journey with Roger, in the book, you talk a little bit about the number of different occasions where you have had an opportunity to spend time with him, sit across with him, if you want to give us a sense of just a cumulative window you have had into his journey and his career.

CC: Yeah, I have been a sports writer for over 35 years, I have been covering tennis almost from the start, I was a mediocre college player in the US, was always drawn to the game, felt very natural to

write about it, and I really understood how hard it was to hit the shots that these guys were hitting because I could not hit them, so that is just the connection with it. And I had been in the business covering top level tennis for about a decade when Roger emerged and I just heard so many positive reviews of his potential, so I was always very interested in watching him play. Frankly, I was not always so sure about what he would achieve in the early years but we first did an interview in Basel, Switzerland where he is from, it was in 2001, and he almost single-handedly destroyed the US Davis Cup team. I went there to Basel to write about Patrick McEnroe's debut as the US Davis Cup captain, ended up writing about Roger being this phenomenal talent who was coming into his own, you could just see from that match and that experience that he was ready to do great things in the game, he started to put it all together. So, I was very curious about him and in those days, he was already speaking to the press in Swiss German and English and French as he did throughout his career. So, to see him then kind of at a rough mode, he was not anywhere near as well-groomed or as polished at that point, but he already had that sort of international reach to him. And he was very engaging, very real and over the years because of my job with The International Herald Tribune and The New York Times, I spent a lot of time internationally, covering all types of sport but a lot of tennis. And we just developed a long-standing professional connection and we would pretty much do an interview every year in depth throughout his whole career. I did not follow him as a youth, but I followed him pretty much through his whole professional career. And we did well over 20 interviews in depth over the years, the last most recent one was after he retired after the Laver Cup a few weeks ago. It is not a friendship by any means, nor should it be in journalism, but it was definitely, and has been a rich connection. And a lot of it has to do with the fact that, you know, I was overseas, I could connect with him as a European player, and because I had covered Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi, Michael Chang, Jim Courier, Edberg, those guys before Roger emerged, I had a really good understanding already of the men's game and the elite level, so there was a nice point of contact there in it. Honestly, it has been, in my long career, one of the very best connections I have ever had with a professional athlete, just in terms of his willingness to talk about his mindset, his experiences, the regularity of it, the in-depth nature of it. Roger is not a guy to cut an interview off, he usually lets it run its course, and a lot of the interviews with him feel more like conversations to be honest.

DJ: Hmm. And going back, one of the things you said Chris, 2001, people were already talking about his potential, can you give us a sense of what people saw at that stage for them to say he would be a special player?

CC: Well, to be honest, the potential chatter began well before that. It began in the mid-1990s in European tennis circles. You talk to Régis Brunet who was his first agent with IMG, watching him play in a junior tournament in Florida when I think he was 13 or 14 years old and literally sprinting to the payphone which tells you how old this story is and how long Roger has been around in the game, he ran to a payphone in Florida and called his contact to get a hold of Roger's parents back in Switzerland because he was so excited by what he saw. And what he saw was somebody with just fluid movement, amazing shot-making potential, phenomenal hand-eye coordination, just an overall sort of kinetic chain to his tennis that was exceptional. If you have watched enough tennis that comes jumping off the court actually as you watch him play, and they could also see the athleticism in the speed and the quickness that he had. And as he developed, the real question was about his attitude and his emotional outbursts and behavior and self-criticism and whether that would hold him back, because it definitely held him back from achieving that full potential in his teens in very early 20s but then again, how many of us in our teens really are the best version of ourselves, probably not too many.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. While this is the 100th conversation at the Play to Potential podcast, I should point out to you that the very first conversation in the podcast was also about Tennis. The guest at that time was Vijay Amritraj (VA) the legendary Indian tennis player. I remember meeting him at the Departure terminal at Mumbai airport and walking up to him to request a conversation when this podcast was just an idea. I remember it was a Monday morning, I was going to Chennai and he was headed to Bangalore. I still remember the look he gave me when I asked him if I could interview him for a podcast. I could see two questions in his eyes. 1) Who are you? 2) And what the hell is a podcast? Podcasting was not quite a thing in those days. I was lucky that he was able to get comfortable with my intent in a couple of minutes. He told me that he was staying at the Leela in Bangalore for a week and he would have time on that Thursday, 3 days later. I just dropped everything else, booked my flight to meet him and record that conversation. Really grateful to see how far the podcast has come along since then.

While it is hard not to get impressed when you see precocious talent in front of you, like what Chris says about Roger's fluidity on court, its useful to keep in mind that celebrating precocity sometimes can be tricky. Vijay gives a useful counter-point that brings in the dimension of effort and commitment.

VA: *"In certain cases, it fairly clear, that you can tell Especially when the kid is anywhere from 8 9 10 up you could possibly, in some case its clear but that doesn't mean he is going to make it or she is going to make it that's where the rub comes just because on a scale of one to ten your talent quotient is 9 doesn't mean you are going to make it and the other side of the coin is if the talent quotient is 1 you are not going to make it. The best examples of those are the fact that hard work will overcome lack of the talent any day of the week and twice on Sunday but lack of work is not going to help an extremely talented guy make it to the top in the similar fashion so hard work is a necessity whether you like it or not, there is no shortcut to greatness but at the end of the day for some peoples it comes a little bit easier, for some people it takes longer. John McEnroe, what he could do in 30 minutes took Ivan Lendl one week to do but they both did it and they both became two of the greatest players. So, I think it can be overcome so just because you look at a child and he or she is not be able to do A,B,C and of course mine was the perfect example as I was growing up because on a scale of 1 to 10 I was probably a -1 and so you can't say as all the Pundits did at that time, oh don't waste time, effort and money on this child because he is not going to be good at anything, but you know, you can overcome most of these obstacles if there is that will and that belief and to be the people to be able to help you get there, so, I think those things are probably the one's to be looking at as oppose to saying, oh he or she can or cannot make it."*

DJ: One of the most common examples that gets quoted in this context is Sachin vs Kambli. Several people say that in terms of intrinsic Potential when they were school kids, Kambli was possibly more gifted than Sachin. In that legendary match in 1988 when they were playing for Shardashram Vidya Mandir, they struck a partnership of 664 and Sachin scored 326 Not Out and Kambli scored 349 Not Out. We now know how their journeys played out.

Anyways, you get the drift. Let's now get back to the conversation with Chris Clarey.

DJ: I want to take it back to parenting Chris. Given the various conversations you have had with him and your understanding of his journey, what do you notice about the parenting he was exposed to with Lynette and Robert, any aspects of their parenting that stand out for you?

CC: Well, I have not really done in depth interviews with Lynette and Robert. I talked to both of them early in Roger's career when they were more accessible. But I have talked to many people about their way of doing things and I talked to Roger about it, and it is combination, I would say, a couple different levels. One is that, we are talking about Switzerland here and Switzerland does not have a real culture of hero worship or sports star superstar worship, it is not really part of the Swiss mentality. So Roger grew up in this situation where even though he was a fabulous talent, he was not going to be put up on a pedestal like a guy like Lionel Messi might have been in Argentina or Cristiano Ronaldo would have been or maybe Novak Djokovic in Serbia went along different situation, that is part of it. I also think that Robert and Lynette had lives of their own, they were successful people. Robert was an executive with a pharmaceutical firm. He is engineer by training. His mom has a very strong personality, a lot of charisma, lot of confidence, wanted to raise a good human as well as a good athlete. The human was more important to them than the athlete all along, and they raised Roger to behave himself and to respect other people and to respect his workspace or his colleagues, and that is all part of it as well. And yes, they watched plenty of his tennis and also, Robert and Lynette were also very involved in Roger's career early in his pro career when he separated with his agent Régis Brunet in the IMG team that I mentioned before and began to run things in house. Mirka who became his wife actually was his press liaison during that period, so he used to call Mirka or text Mirka to get an interview with Roger, so things have definitely changed there. But Robert and Lynette in the Swiss culture and the fact that Lynette is South African by birth, not Swiss, so there was an international meeting of cultures already in the Federer household, Switzerland being a fairly international place anyway and Basel being a city right on the border with France and Germany. Roger grew up with many different cultures mixing in his own house as well as outside his front door, and he was very comfortable navigating in the international waters after that and a lot of that has to do with his parents exposing him to all that at a very early age.

DJ: I loved what you said, for them, raising a good human being was probably a notch higher than raising a great athlete. So, I guess that sort of in a way explains a lot of elements of parenting.

CC: Yeah, there is a lot of good stories about, but I do not know all the stories about Lynette, I am sure there are plenty of those with Robert who was the one who, you know, it is sort of, when he was with his son playing tennis because Robert, Lynette are both avid amateur tennis players, came to the game later in life, and really their enthusiasm, I am sure, was one of the reasons why Roger gravitated to tennis, but their stories of Robert making his son walk home from the club because he was acting up during their matches, unable to control himself and take public transport back instead of giving him a ride. There is a famous story of him coming back from a junior tournament and Roger would not stop complaining in the back of the car and this is not very 21st century, at least not in our countries for parenting, but Robert gets out of the car and buries Roger's head in the snow to cool him off and get him to stop complaining. So, there was some tough love involved, but there were some clear guidelines and parameters put in place by the Federer parents. And honestly, as professional sports writers covered a lot of tennis, you have seen a lot of enabling behavior from parents over the years, not just in tennis, obviously in many sports, and probably in many academic disciplines as well where if the child has an exceptional talent, the parents will cut them too much slack and you end up with a better talent than you do a human. I think the Federer's, at least by all the evidence we have seen from the outside, you never know how things happen when the doors are closed, but all the evidence of Roger being in the public eye for 20 plus years, all the conversations I had for this book, they did a good job at producing a pretty good human too.

DJ: Hmm. And one of the things that struck me was, in the book, you say that Robert also told him, given it is a low odds profession that if you do not get into the top 100 by the time you are 20, then you might as well come back and pull up your socks and focus on academics. Do you have a view on

that because sports also are not an easy profession to make it commercially viable, so any commentary on how they thought about that at different points in time?

CC: Yeah, that was a family thing, but also, it was a Swiss thing. Swiss culture, as I said, is a culture where sports are secondary to academics. I believe Indian culture in many ways is similar to that, a lot of Asian culture as well is similar to that. And it was very much the case in Switzerland that pro athletes were rare, especially exceptional kind and the country had traditional values and there was a sense that maybe sports were not a 100% serious, unless you were skier, maybe that is different there, that is obviously a holy land for them, the snow and in the Alpine Skiing, but the tennis world was one that they were just kind of getting exposed to at elite level. Martina Hingis who was an immigrant had just become number one in the world in the woman's game, not long before Roger began to emerge. So, there was definitely some quality in the Swiss tennis world, but not a lot of confidence from many parents this was going to be a real path to a profitable long-term career. And Robert Federer is a businessman and somebody who understood risk and reward, was very attuned to the fact that his son needed to have a very strong backup plan, and he did a lot of discussion with agents and people who knew the game well and I think his conclusion was if Roger did not arrive at X which was that top 100 position within three or four years from turning pro, then it probably was not going to happen. And because Roger stopped school at 16, his parents were both well educated, it was important to them that Roger get his degree if he was not able to become a pro tennis player and get that education on the road which is true about tennis. It definitely is a school of its own with all the international travel and all the meetings and Roger took full advantage of a lot of that. Some players do not, but he really did.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. This reminds me of an insight from Paddy Upton (PU), Mental Conditioning Coach of the Indian cricket team that won the ODI Cricket world cup in 2011, with Dhoni hitting a last ball six. He speaks about how Sachin Tendulkar's father would obsess about who he was as a human being as much as he would obsess about developing his cricketing capabilities.

PU: *"In fact Sachin told a story of himself when he first made the Indian cricket team as a 16-year-old and when he came back from that tour one of his team mates and very good friends saying to him that you know Sachin we recognize you are a better cricketer than us but since you made the Indian team you are acting as if you are more important person than us and as a group of friends we don't like that. Sachin highlights that as one of the high moments in his career one of my significant sorry should I say moments in his career when he was really able to realize the difference between being a good cricketer and being a human being. Yes he was a great cricketer but it doesn't mean that he is now a great human being or superior or more important human being to his friends and at the time he also mentioned that his father had spoken to him about that your results on the field people will very quickly forget them may be you score a 100 and then you scored a naught the next week they will forget your 100 where you score a naught and you scored the 100 the following week people will forget that but always remember the impact that you have as a person. So, from a young age his father had delivered that message then was reinforced there is 16 years old by his friend saying who you are as a person is separate from the results you achieve on the sports field."*

DJ: I have come to realize that while talent and hard work takes you to the top, what determines staying power is the values of the individual which more often than not have been shaped by early years.

I also loved another point that Chris makes when he speaks about how Robert and Lynette set Roger a goal post when he decided to pursue tennis. If you don't get into the Top 100 by the time you are 20, you might as well come back and focus on academics. There is something to be said about how you give the long rope and where you keep the safety net for the child as they grow up.

Something similar came up in my conversation with Atul Kasbekar (AK), one of the celebrated photographers of the country, the man behind the Kingfisher Calendar. He was actually studying chemical engineering at UDCT, one of the top Chemical Engineering colleges in India. He says that he picked Chemical Engg because he liked Chemistry. Very quickly, he figured out that Chemical Engineering had nothing to do with Chemistry and wanted to go after Photography. He shares what his father said at that point in time.

AK: *"To give absolute due credit, even though he couldn't afford it at that time, my dad insisted that 'Whatever education you want is not a problem. You figure out which is the best place in the world to go to and I will send you there.' I was like, but you can't afford it right now. And he said, 'Shut up! That's none of your business. But this is your long rope, because education is everything.' He always had this thing about degree. So, I said, photography, I don't really need a degree. I can assist people, I can learn, etcetera. He said, 'No, I want a degree to make myself happy. That degree is my receipt for the money I am spending. So, you give me my receipt. I don't care what you do with this.' So, it was a great line. He said, 'This is your long rope. Now, you come up with it or you hang yourself is up to you, but I am giving you that long rope and after I have taken care of your education and your sisters' education, etcetera, your mother and I will studiously spend your inheritance.' Which I thought was a very cool thing.*

And that's one of the few lines I have brutally used with my kids, 'Kya padhna hain bataao? You get that one shot at the title. After that, good luck, buddy. And if you need me to make phone calls, I am more than happy to make them. Do you need me to stand guarantor of something? I am happy to do that. But you go on your journey now.' Then, that safety net right now which is right under your arse, for my kids, I will move that now 30 feet below, and then further below, and then take it away."

DJ: I guess, as our kids grow up, they are much more likely to make unorthodox choices in the way they think about passion and opportunity. How we think about supporting their passion and ambition while taking care of the risk is a tricky tight rope. Something for us to learn from these journeys here.

If you want to tune into the conversations with Atul Kasbekar and Paddy Upton, you can just go to www.playtopotential.com and look up the Guests section there. Let's now get back to the conversation with Chris Clarey.

DJ: One thing that really struck me in the book was, you say that one habit that separates Federer from most of the elite athletes, I have encountered is that he will ask about you first and not in a perfunctory manner, inquiring about your journey to the particular place, your own perceptions of tournament, the country, the people, what struck me was he is an extremely curious individual, can you talk about that element of his personality and the way it comes across as a journalist?

CC: It is quite surprising in a way because this is not somebody who was a brilliant student. He might have had good aptitude I do not know but his performance in school was not particularly exceptional. He was somebody who gets distracted easily, his priority was on sport, and not somebody who particularly enjoyed sitting in the classroom from what I understand anyway and digging into the books. I feel like he was almost a hyperactive child in some ways which has served

him well in the sports world but probably did not serve him well in the classroom. He would agree with that. And yet, because of the kind of life he was going to lead with his international aspects, all these different types of people you are going to meet across all different levels of society from the players, to the agents, to the sponsors, often very wealthy successful people at a high level and much older, it is a wide range of personalities you are going to come across. And Roger decided early after consulting with his parents or his own natural way of being that he was going to try to learn from people that he met along the way, and not just give information grudgingly about himself or be a passenger in this journey, he wanted to be active. And so, my sense of him as a journalist, I would say I did not know him when he was 15, I met him when he was 18-19, was he was already on that journey trying to find out from people that he came across how does this work, what is your job, what do you actually do, where else have you been this week and who else have you met, what else you like. It was not like he was going on for 20 minutes about this, but he was curious to place you and learn about where you fit into the ecosystem. And he has a good sense about people, he made good choices about the people that he trusted along the way. He showed loyalty but maybe not too much loyalty along the way which was probably good, you need to keep refreshing your group, but in terms of the way he comes across, many of the athletes that you meet over the years, it is kind of a one-way conversation and it really is an interview, it is like you are extracting information sometimes. And Roger, it was definitely more two ways than hardly anybody else I came across and also, you just sense in his demeanor, he would sit down and he would not like cross his legs and his body and close himself off, he was open. Relaxed body language, open to conversation, somebody who enjoyed human contact and enjoyed that dialogue with whomever it might be. I know it is not just journalism, I mean, you could say, well, it is PR. Well, sure it is, sure it is PR. He is somebody who is, he knows The New York Times can be helpful to him and raise his profile as a Swiss tennis player and maybe down the road earn him some money for sure, but then, you hear stories about him talking to friends of friends who are construction workers or, for a couple of these stories where Roger meets somebody through somebody else where it could just be a handshake and it turns into yeah, how do you actually do construction, how do you build a house, how do you do these things. This is not the usual superstar athlete behavior from my experience anyway.

DJ: And in the book, you talk about his growth mindset. In one of the sections, you talk about the feedback from coach Adolf Kacovsky, I hope I have pronounced it right, who said that he had never seen a junior who could apply his feedback so quickly. Can you share a little more about Roger's sort of that growth mindset, curiosity towards others being one facet of it but if you were to expand on just his willingness to learn and grow, are there a few other themes that stand out about how he went about learning?

CC: Well, genius is an overused word, we should use very carefully, but I do think Roger is a tennis genius in the sense his physical capacities plus his ability to translate mind's eye to action is genius level, it is such a rarity. And that was what struck Régis Brunet as he ran to the payphone, it is what struck a lot of people over the years. But the people working with him day to day, I have heard that from all of his coaches that Roger, if you explain something to him, he could execute it very very quickly, and not just tennis, other skills and other sports as well too, somebody who had a very very quick learning curve. And he is also somebody who, you know, Marc Rosset, who used to be the leading Swiss player on the men's side before Roger came along, talked about Roger's vision, his ability is to see the whole court, the whole playing field and to process information quickly on a physical sense, much more quickly than any other player he came across in tennis. He compared him to Messi or Michael Jordan, people like that who are able to take all the information that is flying around and then almost slow it down because what they are experiencing is because the way they are processing that input, it actually seems to give them more time to do things. And it is a wide range of skills we are talking about here, the idea of being a quick learner maybe is not directly

related to that but I do think it is indirectly related to that. And Roger's ability to take in input and then physically act it out is exceptional. And he was, at that age, typically his early life which was when Adolf was coaching him before Peter Carter came along in Basel, it was just a sense that Roger had a short attention span, and so you better keep him interested, you better keep it lively and keep it varied, and all of his coaches, along the way, recognized that and catered to it. Obviously, as Roger hit his 30s, I am sure that was as much of a necessity as it was when he was in his teens and 20s, but the fact people recognized that and maybe he recognized it in himself, helped him to acquire a lot of skills quickly and they just kept churning it out and giving him new things to do.

DJ: Hmm. And one of the facets I want to talk about is his inner game, the mental game. You alluded to it sometime back, he did have quite a bit of talent that was spotted at an early age, but how he handled himself mentally, there was room for growth and transformation. And one of the phrases you say in the book struck me, you say that Peter Carter and Peter Smith worked on it as a long-term project rather than treating it as a quick fix. Can you talk a little bit about his journey with the mental game, especially the crucial phase where he could have probably gone in a different direction?

CC: Yeah, a lot of the book does focus on that journey. To me, as a writer, it was the most interesting part. And honestly, I knew that there had been a transformation but I really did not know of the particulars of it and I did not know to what degree he really tried to tackle it and those around him tried to tackle it. And basically, the problem was focus, expectation, self-criticism. Roger is, anyone can attest who watches him after a big victory or a big defeat with the emotions that he shows, obviously an emotional sensitive person, very empathetic and that empathy has probably a flipside for an athlete in that you are feeling everything going on and it is hard to manage all that. So early on, some of the meltdowns Roger had, tears after junior defeats, there is a story of him at the club in Basel, old boys from one of the early coaches saying that they would finish the tournament and all the other kids had grabbed their lunch and gone into the clubhouse to eat their picnic and Roger was still underneath the umpire's chair crying and others had to convince him that it was okay to come back in. So yes, we all mature, we all change in that regard, but that essence of a person is there from an early age. So that was Rogers's battlefield, really was to find a way to channel all that to use it for good, not for evil. And it is a long journey, but to sum it up, basically, Peter Carter and other people who coached him, Peter Carter was an Australian coach who ended up in Basel, was a journeyman pro, with a game very similar to Roger's with the one-handed backhand, elegant strokes, a lot of what Roger Federer is on the court, has to deal with Peter Carter's influence from an early age in the way he taught him the game, but Peter was a second father, Roger has a father, but a second father for him in a lot of ways, and he recognized that Roger needed to find a way to master this part of his personality to play his best tennis. And ultimately, it took Roger realizing that as well that the kind of blow-ups, the shouts, the tossed rackets ultimately hurt him. There are a few players out there who might find that it helps. You think about a guy like John McEnroe, I am convinced that Novak Djokovic sometimes benefits too from the outbursts that allow him to kind of exercise some of these demons and move on, Roger was not like that. It really hurt him and knocked them off his game, so he knew he had to manage it. And they did it through a variety of manners. They did it through early use of his sports psychologists, got in Christian Marcolli who was a former professional soccer player from Switzerland, a very very engaging guy, there is Pierre Paganini who has a huge influence on Roger, was his fitness trainer from pretty much the beginning of his pro career all the way through, still is today even in retirement I am sure, also worked with Stan Wawrinka. And Pierre is kind of a philosopher king, he is somebody who talks about fitness in a very profound way, such as go to that sprint or go to that, there is always a method and reason behind it and he really became a close confidant of Roger's and helped him work through his emotions. And there is a natural maturity that goes with it too, but ultimately what happened was Roger, around 2001-2000, clearly had a huge talent. He was already a factor on the ATP tour, he finished 4th at the

Olympics in Sydney in 2000, he won his first title early in 2001, destroyed us in Davis Cup, as I said, in 2001.

DJ: He had beaten Pete Sampras that year in the quarterfinals, did not he?

CC: And after that, he came on and beat Pete Sampras in the 4th round at Wimbledon and it was a big breakthrough match for him and he showed all that talent that you can see already earlier in the year that was coming together for him. And yet, it was not, from there, to dominance. It was a two-year period where it still was not happening. And there were other people in the game like Andy Roddick, Juan Carlos Ferrero who now coaches Carlos Alcaraz, Lleyton Hewitt of course who already was number one at that time, Marat Safin. These are all the guys who could have been the guy for a long time, instead, it turned out to be Roger, and then Rafa, then Novak. But what happened was Roger realized for him to be able to reach his potential, he had to find a way to make that final step. He had been working on his mental game in controlling his temper for a long time, but he knew that he had to go the next step and really really make it happen in order to be able to play his best tennis and compete with these guys who were very talented and very good and had early edges over him in their rivalry as well. You watch some of those early Lleyton Hewitt-Roger Federer matches from 2001, 2000, 2002, extraordinary matchup and Lleyton got the better of him quite often in some of those matches. So, Roger realized he had to find a way to channel all that emotion and energy inside himself. You see the occasional fist pump but generally, it is very smooth, very sedate, very self-contained. He wears a mask on court and that is not Roger Federer, that is not who he really is deep down. He had to change his overall character and personality in the expression of his tennis in order to play his best tennis. And honestly, that is a bit rare Deepak. Often, we think, okay, your tennis reflects your character, reflects who you really are, in Roger's case, the elegance, the movement, all that of course, but that fiery person inside, you do not see that on the court very often.

DJ: Hmm. And in that context, you also say tennis is a sport where there is a lot of downtime between rallies, rallies are only about 30 odd percent of the total time spent on the court and more than half the time is spent in the head. If we talk about match situations, do you have an insight into how Roger manages the time when he is not playing a point?

CC: Well, it is actually much more than half the time, you think about it. It depends how long your points last. If you are a baseline grinder, maybe so, but if you are trying to do it in two or three shots like Roger often did, it is a lot of time to walk around. And Christian Marcolli, the psychologist he worked with him when he was young, that was his observations, what is the most challenging thing about tennis because Christian has worked like many sports psychologists in many different sports and he goes, that is the hard thing, is that there is so much time between points to mess yourself up, to think about things that can trouble you, and it really is for him about controlling a tennis player's time management and thought management during that period. I do not know precisely what Roger did all through his career but I know in those early years, they worked on things like where your eyes are during a match between points because with a crowd there and point on the other side of the net and chair umpire and maybe family and friends, it is easy to let your eyes wander to other parts of the court and get distracted, and Roger often would kind of go off the boil for long periods of time in matches that he was dominating in his career. I know that he and Christian worked on trying to keep his focus on the strengths, on the area just around him to keep himself in that bubble. And a lot of Roger's work, I am sure, in the mental game was focused on trying to keep himself contained because as an extrovert, gregarious person, he is easily distracted and easily drawn to the wider community in his tennis matches, and he was able to learn to channel that and keep his focus really on the ball in play and the point at hand.

DJ: True. I mean, back to the earlier point you said, if you are curious as a person, then your natural instinct is to absorb what is going on around you and to contain that and to really stay in that bubble, as you say, either between points or when you are sitting under the empire every two games, and keeping your attention, it can be quite challenging

CC: Yeah, and thinking about best of five sets, you are playing three to four hours, almost five hours sometimes, it is a long long time to be sitting in your school chair trying to do your homework there.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. It is fascinating to see how players manage idle time between when they are actually playing. Even in a sport like cricket, if one looks at percentage of time when a batsman is active, it is possibly even smaller than tennis. How the batsman manages his inner voice becomes all the more critical especially when there is sledging going on.

Back to tennis, it is interesting how Roger dealt with this phenomenon. Another element that could help in these situations is rituals. Ethan Kross (EK), author of the book – Chatter which is all about handling the inner voice, speaks about how Rafael Nadal would handle the same issue.

EK: *"I asked him what was the hardest thing he struggled with on the tennis court? And his answer surprised a lot of people because he didn't say the hardest thing, he struggled with was maintaining his endurance or returning his opponent's backhand, it was managing the voice inside his head. It was the mind game that was the most difficult component for him. And if you have ever watched him play you actually know what he does to manage that chatter. Nadal is famous for engaging in elaborate rituals. So, from the time he walks on to the court, how he carries his bag and walks to his bench to the way he positions his water bottles, to the routines he engages in before every single serve, he's highly ritualistic and when asked why he does that, he has said and something to the effect of I order my surroundings to match the order I seek in my head."*

DJ: If this topic is of interest, do look up my conversation with Ethan Kross for a deeper dive into how we can handle the inner voice. You can go to the playtopotential.com website and find him under the guest section. Now lets get back to Chris Clarey.

DJ: I want to go back to Pierre Paganini, his fitness coach, and you say that he has possibly been a key contributor to his longevity. And one of the themes that really strikes me about Roger is playing the long game. Apart from the awards he has won and the titles he has won, what strikes me is just some of his statistic around the number of games he has completed without retiring hurt, the fact that he has played for so long at that level, can you talk a little bit more about how he has managed to play the long game, what are some of the choices he might have made and what is Pierre's approach, what can we learn from it?

CC: Yeah, some of the things that Roger did are directly applicable to all of our lives in a lot of ways. He met Pierre when he was in the town of Ecublens which is on Lake Geneva which is where the Swiss National Training Center was, Roger went there when he was 14 years old, left home in Basel, left his parents for a couple years to go down there as a boarder during the weekdays, and Pierre was running the fitness program there, so they met very early in Roger's life and formed a deep connection. And when Roger reached number one in the world which was in early 2004 after winning The Australian Open, he had won Wimbledon in the year before as first major and then, he won The Australian Open to kind of back that up, he said that he and Pierre sat down and talked

about okay, how do I think long term here, how do we structure my career and my schedule so I can last, and Roger wanted, he loved the game so much and he had a clear vision that he was going to be able to play for a long time and be a factor for a long time, and he wanted to understand through Pierre's fitness expertise how to do that. And some of the conclusions that they made now seem self-evident and many have adopted them but one of the key things was periodization where you are sort of, tennis as a sport is insane, I mean it never ends. They basically have different times, three weeks off at the end of the season, a month after the end of the season if you are a men's pro, it is hardly any time at all to reconstruct your game or to really recover physically enough after 11 months of globetrotting and intense competition. So, they decided they would take the meaningful breaks during the season itself and miss some events which is one of the reasons why Roger basically stopped playing Davis Cup most of the time early in his career. After number one ranking was achieved, he decided that is what had to go and a few other tournaments had to go, but they tried to build a block of training in the spring and in the summer where he was not competing, who is working on his game, refreshing his body and not playing too many tournaments throughout the year. That is a great system if you are a brilliant tennis player who wins a lot because you do not need to play that many tournaments. For an average gentleman pro, to make a living, you need to play 30-35 events a year, it is to make the money you need. So, Roger was in that privileged position and now he had that position in the game, he had the talent to be able to play fewer events and succeed in all of them and get the points he needed for his ranking. But that was very conscious on their part. And hand in hand with that, what he realized very early that when he did show up on tour, he needed to be in the right frame of mind. And those breaks helped him in that department but it was not just that, it was also understanding that when he needed to take himself out of the circuit and the grind of the circuit and that is week to week, city to city rhythm, can be very grueling, very enervating, and he recognized early that he wanted to extricate himself from time to time in order to stay fresh, not just physically but fresh mentally. And honestly, I do not think enough tennis players have taken that approach over the years, and it has hurt a lot of guys. And Roger knew that, and he also knew Pete Sampras and heard stories about him and what happened to Pete who was a fantastic player, number one in the world for many years and multiple Wimbledon winner and similar game to Roger's in some respects, and Pete was just burned out by age 30-31, did not want to travel anymore, did not want to go to the grind of the tour, and he was done. And a lot of those guys of that generation were Edberg, Becker, they were all who finished pretty early, Jim Courier finished pretty early. And Roger had a different...

DJ: I remember when Agassi won a tournament when he was early 30s, it was a big headline that he had won a major when he was, I do not know, 31 or something like that and that was a big deal at that time.

CC: Precisely Deepak, he was 33, he was considered an old number one which is what he was but he was a guy who was, wow, he is setting new standards for longevity in tennis. Well, look at how long Roger has played for, it is blown that out of the water, he has gone back to the days of Ken Rosewall and Pancho Gonzales and players of the past who played into their early 40s. Roger did not intend to go to age 40 I do not think, but he intended to play deep into his 30s. Agassi certainly gave him the idea that it was possible. And he also was intent on managing his body through very precise training, not overdoing it. And Roger, in an interview I did with him near the end of his career in Switzerland, I met him over lunch, we were talking about, it is a lot of different things, and we were talking about just what advice he would give the younger players coming on the tour, and he used the image of the clenched fist and the clenched fist was the idea that if you spend too much time like this, I am holding up my clenched fist as we speak. There is too much of that, eventually, your body would break down and your mind would break down. And you need to find a way to let the fist open and the fingers play and relax and be able to really let the whole organism take its ease, take its rest. And

he was very very smart and very very good at doing that throughout his career. He had some distractions as time went on with his family, but even before his kids arrived, he was already in that mode where he would not stay at the player hotel all the time, he would stay at the zone hotel. Instead of sticking around the practice courts and the clubhouse, he would go into the cities that he was visiting and explore them, not like everyone like you and me, but he would go out stroll around and look at the sites, maybe visiting museum or so. He felt the importance of that because it allowed him to unclench his fist. And one of the reasons that he lasted as long as he did and, as I said, what is applicable there is to all of us in intense professions we might be in, you need to take that time and not just kind of halftime where you are sort of, okay, I am still on email, I am still doing my messages but really break away and regenerate, and then when you go back to your workplace, in his case, tennis tournaments of the world, you are fresh, you are eager and in Roger's case, that is part of the reason he is so popular. He was able to really come to his workplace and his public arenas with a lot of positive energy because he knew himself well enough to pull away from it when he was not feeling that.

DJ: Hmm. I loved an anecdote in the book. You talk about Wimbledon 2011. You speak about Federer blowing a two set lead with Jo-Wilfried Tsonga and losing the match in the quarterfinals, and you say that he goes back, goes back to his home, Wimbledon home, puts his bags down and is rolling on the floor with the twins, Myla and Charlene in a few minutes, and he is in a different world, that just amazes me. Just building on what you just said, the ability that he led a full life and sometimes, these things can help you heal and recharge much faster than if you wallowed in tennis for much longer.

CC: Yeah, and again, that applies to all of us in the sense of how you are able to separate those professional disappointments from your private life and it has helped many athletes that I have known to have a family on the side to kind of put things in perspective. What is interesting about that story in particular is, the proximity of the house to the courts of Wimbledon. When you are Roger Federer, you can rent a house very close to Wimbledon and the club, so it accelerates the timeline. I would imagine a lot of players will come back from their crushing defeat and play with their kids that evening maybe or the next day, but this is literally minutes after he arrives back after this defeat. And that is what is surprising about Roger, it is just the way he can change the chip so quickly in a lot of different aspects. There is a lot of great stories about him, hanging out in the locker room before matches to begin, James Blake, former American player told me the story of just, are you talking of real estate in Switzerland, vacation with Roger where he and Mirka were thinking about going and then the bell rings and at the door you go and Roger is trying to bash your brains out on the tennis court minutes later. So, he is somebody who has been able to change that chip. And maybe, we all know somebody like that in our professional worlds who can kind of go from laughing to serious in a moment, but he was able throughout his career to really really compress that timeline and just change his mood and his world very very quickly. We were talking to Ivan Ljubičić just a few weeks ago and he was talking about, there was one of the aspects, Ljubičić was one of his last co-coaches on the tour and former great player himself and it always just amazed him about Roger, his capacity to just shift from person to person, meeting to meeting, situation to situation kind of seamlessly. And he was not seamless when he was 18 but by the time the man in full was there, it was very seamless and Ivan was like, it would just exhaust me, I would be exhausted living a day in his shoes and he just does it as a natural thing.

DJ: And building on that, as a tennis player, one of the things that strikes me, great players, especially Roger, just the agility on the court, and similarly, just the emotional agility, like you said with James Blake, you are talking real estate, you are in a certain state of emotion, you step out, you are able to switch instantaneously and tune into the right emotion at the right time. It is quite something when you see that happen in front of you.

CC: Yeah, I do not know the adaptability in a match situation whether how much it directly applies. I think it does. I have never asked that question. That would be a very good one to understand how that ability to transition quickly allows him to solve problems on the court the same way. Clearly, that idea that Marc Rosset had of his processing speed, would apply to that ability to see an opportunity, sense tactical shift and one of Roger's hallmarks on the court is that he is able to be very unpredictable. And we are talking to Novak Djokovic about this, this is a part about this in the book, when Novak said, the hardest thing about playing Roger was the unpredictability, you never felt comfortable, you never really knew what was going to come out to you in any given moment, so he always had you off balance, whereas Rafa, you kind of knew. Rafa has got a little more unpredictable as time has gone on with the serve and volley, to deal with that topspin forehand and Rafa settling in and ripping any short ball, but Roger, it was more uncertainty there and that was troubling to the very best in the world.

DJ: I remember on that particular note when he was playing around with the SABR, I remember Djokovic experiencing that on the other side, and you can really see when people get rattled when something like that happens. So, I remember Djokovic getting rattled by the SABR when he was playing around with it.

CC: Yeah, that came out of a practice, just sort of goofing around, experimentation. I guess it is kind of like Google with 80% of your worktime is on your job and 20% outside the lines. That was an outside the line's moment. He was just fooling around with Severin Lüthi, his coach, and it worked and he is like well, we will incorporate this. So that is also a sign that he likes novelty, he likes to change things up, keeps him fresh, and that applies to all of us in our worlds for sure.

DJ: Even the tweener, he pulled it out against Djokovic at the penultimate point at the US Open. When I look at Federer, it looks like he has turned that into almost like a proper tennis stroke.

CC: Yeah, the 2005 Australian Open, it bit him in the tail because he usually gets Marat Safin, when Roger had a match point, Safin volleyed it away for a win and Roger ended up losing the match, so it did not always work for him. And he was not the one who invented the tweener. If you go back and look at like Victor Pecci and people like that back in the day from, they were using that shot, Yannick Noah, but Roger certainly popularized it and it does reflect his desire to shake things up and keep it interesting for him too.

DJ: Hmm. I want to talk about coaching Roger. In the book at various points, you talk about how Roger has gone about choosing coaches at different points in time. Peter Lundgren instead of Carter, goes through a phase of having no coach instead of Peter Lundgren, Stefan Edberg, Ivan Ljubičić, Severin Lüthi has been with him along the way, can you talk a little bit about his choice of coaching and what he has sought from the coaching, if I may use the word intervention, but with a coaching partner, can you talk a little bit about that?

CC: Yes, it is interesting. It is a mixture of loyalty and then, need for fresh voice from time to time. And he was pretty good, not ruthless, but he was somebody who was pretty good and pretty pragmatic when he needed to make a change that he did. And he often had a situation throughout much of his career where he had two coaches because of his schedule being as it was and kind of the insanity of following up a tennis player around for 11 months of the year, it is pretty brutal for coaches to do that as well as for players to live that life, so if you have two, you can alternate. It is a timeline that in a way is not entirely natural because Peter Carter, this man we have spoken about already, this deeply influential Australian, and Roger and also very close friend, he died in his late 30s on his honeymoon in South Africa after more or less being told how great South Africa was by the Federer family, how he had to go there and went down there, and this freak accident, was killed in a

road accident down there on Safari or heading towards Safari, and that was a huge moment in Roger's life, definitely made him a more serious person about fulfilling his potential. And that was maybe a piece we did not discuss; we discussed the mental game and the evolution. But Peter Carter certainly would have continued to play a big role in Roger's life and career later on, even though Roger made a very difficult choice that you referred to there. When he chose to go as a full-time professional in the late 1990s, he decided to choose Peter Lundgren, former Swedish pro who was connected with all those great Swedish players of the generation, the Wilanders, Borgs and everybody, chose him over Peter Carter because he thought Lundgren had more experience at the highest level than Peter Carter had but Roger described that decision as an excruciatingly difficult one and very hard. And he always kept a connection with Peter Carter, so Peter Carter might have been somebody in his career for 20-25 years in some way as an advisor, did not work out that way. He defined new support systems after Peter Carter's death and yeah, he is somebody he would bring in after much consultation and much thought. He would bring in different people to be the key person in his life. He did go a period of time without a coach. When he split with Peter Lundgren after winning the Australian Open or just before winning the Australian Open in 2004 after a great 2003 season which was pretty bold move considering he was breaking through, to separate from your mentor in that period was quite surprising at the time, but he felt like he needed to, for a bunch of different reasons, I am not sure I fully understand all of them even now after writing the book, but there was a need to do things on his own to create the strength that comes with that, might have been some issues with Peter off the court, I do not know, Roger has always denied that. So, when he went off on his own, he still had some advisors within a circle of guys but he was really making his own decisions for well over a year and then he hired Tony Roche who had been great Australian player, coached Patrick Rafter, coached Lleyton Hewitt later. And he was more traditional, sort of XX's and Os kind of coach and hard work and hard yards and all that sort of thing certain time and then, Roger followed the Pete Sampras model and hired Paul Annacone who coached Pete Sampras throughout much of his later career. And Paul was a very gregarious, engaging, thoughtful guy, definitely not a Tony Roche type. So, Roger in more his mature phase, decided he wanted more of a confidant and a person and advisor as opposed to somebody would be a task master by any means. So that is kind of the approach he kept throughout. Severin Lüthi came in around 2008-2009 I believe, in that sort of period there, maybe even a little bit earlier, and he remained Roger's advisor, hitting partner through the years, but there was always somebody else with him, Paul Annacone, Stefan Edberg, Roger idolized as a youth and wanted to bring him in to work with his idol, but he was working in concert with Severin Lüthi, and then at the end Ivan Ljubičić who was a very close friend of Roger's from the tour, good mind, good analyst of the game, Roger respected him and wanted to have his influence. But it was always kind of a two-headed thing with Roger. He liked that idea of a committee, let us get together with my team, with Paganini, with the coaches of the moment, certainly Severin and then he was Paul or Elan at the end, and he would have team meetings a lot and discuss best way forward, what kind of strings should I be using, what kind of tactics should I be thinking about for the coming year, what should my schedule be, should I skip the French Open, the clay court season. You talk about Roger with him and with his team and there was a lot of collective decisions that were made even though he was the guy out front and a strong position as the great player that he was, but it was not a it is my way of the highway. He liked to feel that input, he took it all in and then he would decide.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host, Deepak Jayaraman. It is fascinating to see how players pick coaches. In one of my early conversations at the podcast, I was speaking with Viren Rasquinha (VR), CEO of Olympic

Gold Quest. When I asked him about how they pick coaches for different players, he used the example of how they found a coach for Mary Kom. He had an interesting insight.

VR: *"How do you pick a coach in the context of a player? So, I will answer it with Mary Kom's example. In 2009, women's boxing was introduced in the London 2012 Olympics for the first time ever. Mary was already a five-time world champion winner, but in the 46 kg weight category and 48 kg for the last one. Now, when women's boxing was announced in 2009, that it would be for the first time in London 2012 Olympics — before that boxing was only a men's sport — but the least weight category for women was 51 kilos. So, that meant Mary Kom, who was originally a 46 kg boxer had to move into 51, which is two weight categories higher. It had been unheard of for a boxer to go two weight categories higher and win an Olympic medal. Now, the challenge was, when you're fighting in a weight category not only do you have to put on the right kind of weight but you are fighting against taller opponents, which is a major technical challenge in boxing. If you are fighting against a taller opponent, that's a big challenge. We researched a lot and found a coach by the name of Charles Atkinson who specialized in taking fighters up weight categories and making them into world champions."*

DJ: There are three things I want to say here. Firstly, I think leaders need to think about what is the development need and find a coach who solves the need. Secondly, there is something to be said about the style of the Coach and whether that style fits well with the Leader. I tell my prospective clients that there are some situations where you want to tough coach who has hard conversations with the Coachee and holds them accountable even if it makes them extremely uncomfortable. I have realized that this is not something that comes naturally to me. When I look at my journey and where I have been able to add value, it is in those situations where people have leaned into the coaching process and are keen to make the difference and pull me in rather than me pushing them. Thirdly and finally, I think there is something to be said about cumulative context. Federer had Severin Luthi had a constant all the way through his journey. And that context is powerful. When I work with leaders on long retainers as a Sounding Board, the cumulative context helps me give them inputs which is contextually relevant and appropriate. At the top, knowing the context is often 80% of the work and can sometimes make all the difference.

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Let's now get back to Chris Clarey and Roger Federer.

DJ: And actually on that part Chris, talking about judgment, whether it is judgment on the tennis court in the moment, what shot to play depending on match situation or match context or even judgment around key decisions, should I play, should I not play, which coach do I work with, do you have a window into just his sense of judgment and how he made decisions? Yes, he involved others and he liked to do things as a committee, but tuning into Roger a little bit, is there something about his judgment that stands out for you?

CC: I can be wrong on this. He may cite different examples if you ask him but my sense of it is, it is interesting, it is a bit of a contrast in the sense that he is such a spontaneous, creative tennis player, instinctive, but a lot of his decision making really is deeply considered. He is not a guy who is going to make us spur the moment off the cuff type of decision. He likes to think things through, really get a lot of input, like I said, and make those decisions from a carefully considered position. He is not a

heat of the moment type of person for those sorts of things. He may be able to tell you an example I am not aware of, that is my sense of it, and it is an interesting contrast. It is almost like he wanted to do the planning, do the legwork, do the research to allow himself to be spontaneous, to allow himself the freedom, to feel like everything is in place, platform is there, and I can use this now to take my leaps on the court and do what I feel is instinctive right thing to do. And I called it in the book planned spontaneity. It sounds like an oxymoron, but it is applied to him and that he would really plan to have his moments of relaxation and spontaneity.

DJ: Got it. And in the book, one of the statistics you quote is off the 128 men who played the singles at the 1999 French Open, his debut Grand Slam tournament, he was the last one playing singles on tour. We spoke about his endurance earlier in the conversation, but just the longevity of his journey has been startling. The related question I wanted to ask you was, what do we know about how he thought about the timing of his retirement, how did he think about it, it is a challenge that not just elite athletes face, successful business leaders face, how do you think about when to hang your boots.

CC: Yeah, in essence, I am not sure Roger got to live that fully, that process because the temptation is to say, well, he was all about the joy and the process and the enjoyment of the game and feel of the ball and his strings, and that sort of the joy of competing, but he never really had an extended period where he was losing to everybody. He was still a big factor. He had two much points to win Wimbledon in 2019 against Novak Djokovic, probably should have won that match, great escape by Novak, full credit to Novak, but Roger was serving missed an ace on the first match point by a couple of centimeters, so it is one of those things. So he was 38 years old there. That would have been a phenomenal thing, the biggest achievement of his career, so he was very much a factor, Australian Open 2020, ends up getting hurt, but loses in the semifinals there. And honestly, the pandemic arrives after that. He does not really play full on tennis again. So he never really had to experience what a guy like Lleyton Hewitt had to experience which is having been on top of the game or Jim Courier had to experience, be on top of the game and then falling away and having an extended period where you are too young to retire but you are not really getting the results you used to get, it is huge frustrations that go with that and Roger never had to experience that. So we can always view him as he views himself, as somebody who loves tennis and played as long as the love was there, as long as his body would allow him to do it. So, in essence, the ending is an unnatural one because I do think if Roger's body would have allowed him to keep playing, he would have kept going for quite a bit longer, two or three more years, but would he have had the results, it would have allowed him to be happy continuing I do not know, it is hard to say. It is easy to imagine that like you see exceptional exceptional athletes who can still move and still do what they, Ken Rosewall was able to play and succeed into his early 40s and reach Grand Slam finals during that period, but it was not the same era of physicality. But I honestly think Roger feels that the end came too soon, even at 41. He would have liked to go out with his boots on, playing another Wimbledon, maybe even winning a title, but I do not see him stopping after a victory. He would have needed some reminders that he was mortal before he stopped ultimately. I am rambling around here because I am thinking it through as we talk, but from talking to him about it after his last match in Laver Cup in London, it was clear that his intention was to try to come back again from the last knee operation and really give it one more good shot, and frankly, that good shot just never came and there was a big disappointment. He absorbed it, but then at the end, was he pragmatic or was he just realistic or was it just really no choice, because when you watch the doubles match in London when he played with Nadal, the last match, you can see the shot making is still there in a lot of ways despite all the rust, surface motion is still smooth. When he has to move laterally, even in doubles, you can see the big difference with prime Roger Federer. And honestly, where the game is now, if you cannot move at a very, very high level, you are just not going to be competitive. These guys are just too fast, look

at guys like Alcaraz, look at Novak who is still so flexible and so good, Rafa, it just cannot be done. So Roger knew that and that is why he called it a day.

DJ: One of the themes I wanted to touch upon Chris was his resilience. One of the matches that really stand out for me, personally my all-time favorite Roger match is possibly the 2017 Australian Open final, Roger, Rafa, I think he would come back from an injury or from a surgery, he was an unseeded player in that tournament and he went on to win it, and one of the finest backhand exhibitions I have seen, one-handed backhand exhibitions I have seen. What have you learnt about his resilience when things are not going well for him at various points in his journey?

CC: Yes, that is an underrated part of Roger's career. He would like you would put that match very high on his list. If you ask him three most important matches, biggest moments of his career, that one would be on it for sure, because it did show that he had grit and he was coming off, but for some athletes, six-month break would not be considered a huge break but in tennis terms for him, it was, and his results before that had been dipping. He had not had the same success, he was still very much a relevant player at the top, but he was not really in Grand Slam winning position. He had not won a Grand Slam since 2012 Wimbledon. It had been almost five years when he won that Australian Open title. So that answered a lot of questions. And he was never in death spiral mode during those five years, but he had lost a lot of ground to Djokovic and to Nadal at different times, other players were also emerging like Andy Murray. So it was a time when he could have not regenerated and he did, and he really took a lot of pleasure in working his way through the problem, coming back feeling physically strong. In that match you mentioned, he was down 3-1 in the 5th set and Rafa was playing some pretty good tennis and required a flurry of brilliance from him to turn that match around and the commitment to not slice in the backhand and hitting through it, commitment to, that is just zeal and love of the game that he was feeling from coming back as the underdog for a change, seeded 17 instead of seeded number 1, 2 or 3, he took a lot of pleasure from that. But otherwise, Roger, if you go back to the beginning when he left home at 14 to go down to Ecublens in Lake Geneva at Swiss National Training Center, the language of the day there was French, not Swiss German and he was an outsider, did not speak French very well at all and he was mocked, taunted, hazed a bit, struggled in school, that was very hard period for him and he always said later on that it was a huge factor in his later success, was being able to be resilient enough to get through that and come out on the other side a stronger person, it has been like a boarding school experience for a regular person. And he grew up a lot from that and took a lot of strength from that. The Peter Carter situation we described when Peter Carter died, Roger running through the streets in Canada, trying to process his emotions overcome by grief, yeah, he used that as a launching pad to greatness but it could easily have gone the other way, could not it, could have been a lot of guilt, lot of regrets, lot of emotions he could not handle, it could have knocked him back as well. So he is somebody, with his vulnerable side, is able to show consistent resilience throughout his career and somebody also who chose to travel with his wife Mirka and his family of two and then four children and hang out in the hotel and not get a good night's sleep and come out there and play a great match the next day. Roger has never had, on a personal level, beside Peter Carter's death, to deal with some hugely debilitating thing in the prime of his career. But he did show a lot of grit.

DJ: In the book, you also talk about Federer, the businessman. He is one of the few sportsmen that have earned more than one billion USD with only about maybe 120-130 Million from official prize money, given that kind of ratio. What can we learn from Federer, the businessman in the way he goes about leading that part of his life outside tennis?

CC: Yes, it is a great question. To be honest with you Deepak, that was probably the hardest chapter I had to write because it is not easy to get those answers sometimes from people. And really, that is quite a story because Roger was not destined to be a cash machine, even though Switzerland

obviously is a place of great affluence and business success and acumen. Swiss athlete is not ideally positioned to be a global superstar. It is not a natural home base that is going to create that passion. You have to create it outside and if you are a British player like Andy Murray or an American player like Andre Agassi, you have a Grand Slam tournament in your country every year to generate that enthusiasm, that support, you have big big home markets. We all know of an Indian men's player who makes a big in singles, sky is the limit economically is going to be crazy when that happens, I think it will happen someday. So Roger had to build that brick by brick and people who managed him really were aware of that challenge. And what helped him was he really made an effort to understand the business side of it. That period of time when he had no agent, he took a lot of lumps, he was frankly underpaid, he probably was not doing great things for the market, a lot of agents were actually angry because he was taking deals through his father and other advisors that were below market value in their opinion and hurting their own negotiating stances with their own players. But he was somebody who was able to take the time away from an agent to ask a lot of questions, use his curiosity and really go in the meetings, he talks about coming back from tournaments going into a business meeting about how to manage a contract or how to negotiate something and he really learnt the nuts and bolts of it because he had heard a lot of stories about athletes who lost their fortunes and lost their money because they just did not follow day to day. And the other thing besides the clinched fist that he advises young players and young athletes is, understand your money, understand how it all operates, understand that financial system and how that money is coming in and where it is going and really, plug yourself into it, even though it can seem, in some ways, uninspiring at times and as much fun as something else planning that night, it pays off in the long run, and he was very focused on that and his parents also emphasized that as well. And ultimately, he ended up choosing to go back with IMG again with a different agent, guy named Tony Godsick who had worked with Monica Seles and Lindsay Davenport, Tommy Haas, and Tony frankly has proven to be a brilliant manager of Roger's career, not just the money but the overall image and overall way he presents. And together with Roger's consistent excellence and Roger's consistent amiability and sympathy, the combination of enduring excellence, enduring sympathy and basically, enduring elegance, you never get tired of watching if you are a sports fan because the way the guy moves on the court, that was the killer combination and that produced catnip for the sponsors, a lot of them Swiss, but a lot of them not Swiss as well. And a lot of those deals are long-term deals, very lucrative. And even when things did not go well for him, when Nike decided they had had enough, when they didn't pay him what he thought he was deserving in his late 30s to renew, ended up landing very much on his feet. Signing with Uniqlo, maybe a little bit down market overall, but the deal was incredibly lucrative, and then deciding to get involved with On, the running shoe company based in Switzerland in kind of a market share perspective, owning some stock and that has exploded as you can see on the streets of North America with all the On running shoes you see. So Roger turned that Nike rejection into two huge opportunities in apparel and shoes. And so, it is a combination of doing your homework, having this crazy combination of skills and appeal and not screwing up, not having the scandal, not having the mistake that destroyed his public capital and change people's opinion. And we have seen a lot of athletes, unfortunately that has happened to over the years where things just turned the wrong direction. And Roger was not that kind of person to begin with, but it cannot be a coincidence that he went for that many years without anything really major cloud in the landscape, smart guy and he understood when things did flare up, he knew how to extinguish the flames very quickly, and it was not by hiding, it was by addressing it.

DJ: Hmm. And you actually say in that context what makes him unique is not the performance on the court but his performance in the boardrooms and corporate suites and how he delivers personalized service.

CC: It is a combination Deepak, to be honest. I do not think there are many more elegant tennis players. He is a ballet dancer out there in a lot of ways. He has also got the grit. There are other players who are beautiful to watch, Grigor Dimitrov, how many Grand Slams has Grigor won, none. So the elegance plus the excellence, the enduring quality and the way he connects with people, whether it is somebody unimportant like me or somebody who is like the sponsor who is going to give him a hundred million dollar deal or the friend of the friend who is a construction worker, he wants to understand how you build a building, way he connects with people, even though he is not somebody who is like a Nick Kyrgios who is going to go over and chat with the fan on the side of the stands mid-match, he connected with people throughout his whole career and that is really the heart of it.

DJ: Chris, this podcast is titled Play To Potential. Given all the work you have done as a sports journalist, your understanding of Federer and several other elite athletes, what is your take on the phrase Playing To Potential?

CC: That is an interesting one through the optic of Roger really because if you talk to some people like Günter Bresnik, one of the guys I respect the most in tennis, he is an Austrian coach, coach Becker who was the guy who basically molded Dominic Thiem's game into a great force, he thinks that Roger underperformed. He thinks Roger should have won 30 or more Grand Slam tournaments based on all those matches that were, the match points up that he did not convert, just based on his incredible talent level. And that is tempting perspective because obviously, he has blown two match point leads against Novak, two US opens and one Wimbledon and he has had some other losses along the way that were surprising at Slams, Roger would say those things even out over the long run that he won matches that he maybe was not destined to win as well.

DJ: True, the Roddick Wimbledon, 1970, he had a share of...

CC: Yeah, that is one he has mentioned and also the match you mentioned before, the 2017 Australian with that, 3-1 upper break lead, Nadal, Rafa does not lose too many upper break leads in the 5th set, so that is his argument, but it is actually, I would go wider than that, and Roger, his weaknesses are also his strengths because he is somebody, yeah, his tendency to take more risk, probably has lead to some defeats that might not happen to some of the other guys like a Novak or a Rafa, and yet, that desire to take the risk, that desire to be spontaneous, that sensitivity that is in him, that is the motor for his game and the motor for his longevity as well because he is a guy obviously we talked about a lot today, he is somebody who likes novelty, likes the innovation, likes the creativity, likes to be on the edge and feel that thrill, and he is a very instinctive tennis player. So that vulnerable side to him, the flipside of it was, it was the innovation and creativity that kept him going for so long. Without that, he would not have lasted or burnt as brightly as long as he did. So I personally feel Roger did fulfill his potential in tennis or very very very close and he definitely fulfilled it off the court. And that is a part of the package in tennis, you are giving a lot of interviews, you are signing a lot of deals, you are touching a lot of people and shaking a lot of hands, and he probably performed to potential there and there is a lot to learn from him, probably more in that aspect than the tennis which is pretty hard to relate to sometimes.

DJ: And we talk about success, maybe if I could persist for another minute or two, how does a person like him set goal posts? When you are at the cutting edge of redefining a lot of playbooks, what is your take on how people like Roger think about success?

CC: Well, again, he is somebody who is spontaneous inside the lines and more considered outside the lines and he tends to think medium to long term. You talk to him about his schedule sometimes in the prime of his career and he knew where he was going to be like a year and a half out, he knew

his schedule. A lot of guys might be six months, nine months, Roger like knew what meeting he was going to be in on a day in July, a year before, what part of the world, what court he would be on and it was very very planned out. So that Swiss side, that regimented organized side, and there is probably more the South African, even a Latin side doing where it was letting it flow, letting it go. And in terms of his goal setting, he seemed to be to me pretty methodical, pretty systematic about that. And he and Tony Godsick, his long-term agent now, interrupted his period of independence, has been his main guy for a long time. They do a lot of planning meetings, a lot of strategic thinking, and this pivot to On running, pivot to Roger investing in sports companies, we have not talked about his foundation at all today but that is a huge part of his future plans as well. Roger Federer Foundation, many athletes and stars have foundations, he started his when he was quite young, his family is quite involved, he wants to really make an impact with education around the world for youth, primary school in particular, he has made a lot of connections with Bill Gates through tennis exhibitions and just general picking his brain, that is not by coincidence. Roger likes to find a mentor for the next chapter in his life, get to know them, enjoy that connection but also learn from that and that is something he has done throughout his career, it is been a pattern.

DJ: Fascinating, Chris thank you so much for making the time on the podcast, real pleasure to meet you.

CC: Deepak, I love your subject and I love your style, so thanks very much for having me.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: We have all seen Roger being fluid on court and move around so beautifully. If there is one thing that struck me in this entire conversation, it is the fluidity with which Federer was able to walk tight ropes across multiple dimensions. Planned AND Spontaneous, Deciding with Heart AND Head, Handling Peak Intensity AND Longevity, Spending time on Work AND Family, Stormy from within AND Composed on the exterior, Being a great Tennis player AND a shrewd business-man and much much more.

Much to learn and emulate from this amazing human being. Hope you enjoyed the 100th conversation of the Play to Potential Podcast. We are excited about how far we have come on this journey and plan to keep marching on for the years to come. If you are seeing value, do share with your networks and take a moment to rate and review this show on Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

Thank you and look forward to having you at one of the subsequent conversations at the Podcast.

Bye Now

End of transcription

Nugget from Vijay Amritraj that is referenced: [Spotting Long Term Potential](#).

Nugget from Paddy Upton that is referenced: [Sachin Tendulkar and personal mastery](#).

Nugget from Atul Kasbekar that is referenced: [Transitioning from Engineering to Photography](#).

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Personal Brand: This is not a new concept but as we hurtle towards a world where the Gig Economy will be a key structural component of the economy in addition to large organizations, how we build our personal brand is something every leader needs to be thinking about. What can we learn from how Businesses build brands? How does that need to change in the digital world? You can access the playlist [here](#).

In Summary – Playing to Potential: This playlist captures the essence of what the speaker is trying to say in their conversation. In a way, it captures the key principles with which they have approached life which has brought them to where they are today. They share their perspectives on the mindset we need to adopt as we navigate through life. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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- 100.05 Christopher Clarey - Secret to Roger's longevity
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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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