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## Context to the nugget conversation

Chris speaks about how Roger thought about his Coaches at various points in time and how he moved from Peter Carter to Peter Lundgren to Tony Roche to Paul Annacone to Stefan Edberg to Ivan Ljubičić while having Severin Luthi as a constant in his team. He speaks about his judgment on some of these matters over his career.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): 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?

Christopher Clarey (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 Xs 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: 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.

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Viren Rasquinha that is referenced: [Picking a coach - Learning from Mary Kom's example](#).

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### Christopher Clarey - Nuggets

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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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