



Montreal Rendezvous Interview- *Michael Chang*

PHONE TRANSCRIPT, 1/24/12:

Introduction for Michael Chang

by StarGames LLC Executive Director of Events, Josh Ripple:

During the days that Michael actually catapulted onto the tennis scene as a young man of 17, I enjoyed being involved with him at many ATP Tour events in the 90's.

I will always remember Michael as the youngest player ever to win the French Open when he was 17 years old, at the 1989 French Open. I was always amazed at him, as he was one of the most consistent winning players on the tour. Michael, you know your record far better than I do, but if I remember correctly, during the 1990s I don't think you ever left the top-ten in seven or eight years. In the world of tennis, that level is pretty amazing. He is a friend of Canadian tennis, as he was the Canadian Open Champion back in 1990. And with all of his accomplishments he was deservedly inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 2008.

Personally, the thing I am probably most envious of Michael for, I'm sorry to say this Michael, but next month, you proudly turn 40. But what pisses most of us off, is that you still look like you're 17 (*laughs*). So, good job on that!

With that brief introduction, we would like to introduce one of our four great champions coming to play on Friday, March 2nd at the Montreal Rendezvous, Michael Chang.

First question please:

Q. Michael, it is so nice to welcome you back to Montreal. Just wondering, why do you want to play against those old guys?

Well, I think the first reason I want to play the old guys is because I am the youngest of all the old guys (*laughs*).

I think it is fair to say that for all that is cherished with the players- you know myself, Andre Agassi, Pete Sampras, Jim Courier, Ivan Lendl, Jimmy Connors, and John McEnroe, we still have a love and passion for the game and that has never changed.

For a lot of us, we retired and it was pretty customary for us to take some time off, but you can't go too far when you have a love for tennis. Certainly after a little bit of time, everyone gets the itch to come out and play again and compete again. And certainly to have the opportunity to play against your peers and rivals on the grand stages is something we look forward to and get really, really excited about.

This particular opportunity in Montreal is an added excitement for me because I have not played Andre for quite some time, and I'm certainly looking forward to the opportunity to play him once again.

Q. Michael, who is the tennis player right now who impresses you the most and why?

Well, I think it's hard to look past Novak Djokovic. The year he had last year was phenomenal; I don't think anyone will question that.

I think it is interesting too because I don't think anyone else had a bad year last year, but his results stand so far above and beyond everyone else's, that it is tough to take notice of the other players that did very well. Even Roger Federer is still playing some great tennis, as evidence in the last few tournaments he played last year, and he still went to the semis and finals of Grand Slam tournaments. The only reason (*Novak has received so much attention*) is that Novak is going out and winning three out of the four majors. Rafa is still playing well, but it's hard to look past what Novak has done.

It will be interesting to see how he responds this year. Normally, the subsequent year after having a phenomenal year, there is a little bit of added pressure. Obviously, being number one in the world will add a little more excitement to some of these big events.

Q. Mr. Chang, a lot of players have complained recently about the life on tour being too tough with too many tournaments, and the schedule being too tight. How do you compare the situation right now to what it was when you were in your prime?

Well, actually I'm still in my prime (*laughs*).

It's interesting, because I think what Rafa has been saying is really no different than what we have been saying for many, many years. If you look at the sport of tennis in comparison to all the other sports, the tennis season is by far the longest, especially for the top players.

By the time the Australian rolls around, you have maybe played one or two events prior to the Australian Open. You are pretty much down in Australia the beginning of January. If you play throughout the whole year, play the World Championships, and also play the final (*of the World Championships*), by the time you're done it is pretty much December already. You really don't have a lot of time to recover from the previous year.

So, I think that is part of the reason why guys like Rafa and Novak are more cautious now towards the end of the season. Because even though they want to go out and do well, they are just not able to do that.

The other side is that there are so many tournaments that are still wanting to get on the calendar. So, it is hard for the ATP Tour to say OK we need to cut out another month of tennis just to give our players enough time to rest and recover.

So, the important thing becomes really how they (*the players*) schedule his or her events through the year. I don't think it becomes as much of an issue on the women's side, as the women's tour has a longer layover than the men do. But for Rafa and Novak and some of these guys who play rigorous tennis, it takes a toll on their bodies.

For this new generation, for them to play 15 or 16 years like I did or Pete and I did, you would like to be able to see that longevity. I would hope they (*ATP Tour*) would change something to allow that to happen.

Q. How do you feel about the competition in Montreal next March, and are you going to win?

(Laughs) You know, it's interesting, I think to have the opportunity to play against Andre after having been quite awhile since I last played him, is something I'm really looking forward to.

We have had some great matches along the way in our junior years and throughout our professional years. I think that Andre has beaten me a few more times than I have beaten him on tour, but I did get a good win against him in Canada at the Canadian Open in 1990. So, hopefully I'll take a little bit from that even though we are playing in Montreal.

Either way, it's going to be a really exciting event and I'm certainly looking forward to it. Hopefully we'll be able to play some really good tennis and it should be a great showdown.

END

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