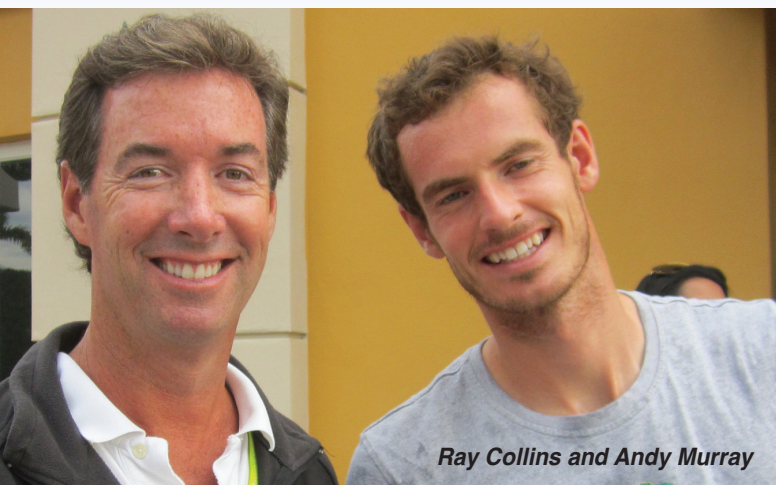


Novak Djokovic's short volley brought me to net where I hit a forehand at Ana Ivanovic's feet. She responded with a shot to my partner Andy Murray. I won the point with a shot behind my back over Djokovic's head. Huh? Isn't this where the alarm goes off? No, this was all true. Every word of it. Now let me tell you how I got here.

The Shot Seen around the World



Ray Collins and Andy Murray

I was going to the Sony Open anyway, so when the Ritz Carlton in Key Biscayne asked if I was going to be around, I was quick to say "yes." I had previously corresponded with the Ritz about doing a travel article on behalf of this magazine. The PR director asked if I wanted to play one point with Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray.

I didn't get nervous, because I doubted it would ever actually happen. Having spent a career in the media, I know how these things rarely come off as planned, so I didn't tell a lot of people.

Arriving early, I tried to find a wall to quietly hit a few balls in case I did get out there. It's one thing to play my friends without warming up, but another to come in cold against the #1 and #3 in the world. There were about five of us from the media that were going to have this once-in-a-lifetime chance. Fortunately, I was one of the last ones called. The first few hadn't played much tennis, so I felt the pressure was off.

Hall of Fame player-turned-commentator **Cliff Drysdale** called my name in his familiar soothing South African accent. My partner, **Andy Murray** (hard to write that with a straight face), introduced himself to me as I walked out (as if I didn't know his name!). I didn't want to tell Murray I usually play the "ad court." I figured since he won a Gold Medal in the Olympics, I should let him have the side he wants. That's my usual rule of thumb

DID I JUST DO THAT?



Ray's trick shot on Key Biscayne took Djokovic by surprise.



Ray and Ana Ivanovic



Ray and Novak Djokovic

when deciding which side to play: *How many world titles does my partner have?*

With darling **Ana Ivanovic** at the net, **Djokovic** put in a serve and the point was in play. Djokovic hit a short ball that drew me to net and a rat-a-tat-tat rally ensued between the four of us. After 23 hits, the moment came that still has me shaking my head: Djokovic hit the ball at my backhand. I didn't get my racquet there in time, so I instinctively put the racquet behind my back. The ball not only went back over the net, it cleared Djokovic's head and landed in the court! Djokovic ran back and tried to hit a "tweener" (between his legs) but couldn't get there in time.

The crowd erupted. Andy and Ana began laughing as we high-fived at what just happened. Novak ran up from the back fence with a grin on his face and his hand-extended. I heard myself say, "Did I just do that?" He laughed and said "good shot." Drysdale said, "Now that is a memorable moment."

Fortunately, I had bought a video camera a few months earlier and had asked another member of the media to press record and point it toward the court when I was out there. When I returned to the back of the court, I calmly asked her if she got it. She said, "I hope so!" She had!

I brought the precious evidence back to Sarasota and put the video on YouTube. Even my closest friends were skeptical until they saw the link. After a month, the video was viewed over 31,000 times in over 110 countries. (Type in "Ray Collins Trick Shot" and you'll see it.) One of the Serbian players at the Sarasota Open told me the incident was written up in his hometown paper! My hometown paper in Buffalo also called, and it's on dozens of webpages—complete with message board discussions about it as well.

Bottom line—it was the perfect storm to have the opportunity to be on the court with those players, hit that lucky shot AND have it captured on video-tape. The fact that it's brought me back in touch with a lot of my tennis friends around Sarasota and around the country has been the best byproduct of all.

Ray Collins is a communications consultant in Sarasota. More details at www.RayCollinsMedia.com.