



Ray Collins goes

ONE
ON
ONE

with Mischa Zverev



MISCHA ZVEREV

The 2016 White Sands Joey Gratton Sarasota Open Men's Champion

Mischa Zverev celebrated his first ATP singles tour victory at the 9th Sarasota Open in April. The 28-year old lefty, was born in Moscow, raised in Germany and currently resides in Monte Carlo, Monaco, where he is coached by his father, Alexander.

Mischa proved the cliché, “Third time’s a charm” by finally winning in Sarasota on his third attempt. His straight set win over Austria’s Gerald Melzer was hard fought and earned him 100 ATP points and \$14,500 in prize money.

Mischa’s much younger brother (by nearly ten years), Sascha, is a rising star and some say youth may soon overtake experience in the Zverev family ranking.

Play Sarasota’s Ray Collins was the first to interview Mischa, minutes after winning the 2016 Sarasota Open at the Lakewood Ranch Tennis and Athletic Club. They talked about everything from Sarasota to sibling rivalry—or lack thereof.



YOU WON IN STRAIGHT SETS BUT HAD A LITTLE HICCUP TOWARD THE END AND HAD TO WIN IN A TIE-BREAKER. WHAT HAPPENED?

You know how it is, you’re serving for the finals, you’re serving for the match, you’re serving for the championship and you get a little nervous, so that’s pretty normal. But I’ve been there a few times so I know how to handle it. You just try to stay cool and calm and focus.

YOU PLAY ALL OVER THE WORLD. HOW DO YOU LIKE THE SARASOTA OPEN?

It’s a great tournament. I was staying with some great friends of my family. It’s been a great week, not too far from my home where I train in Saddlebrook (Wesley Chapel) and I really enjoy the great facility. It’s a very loving crowd. The people make it special; the people are very nice and that’s always a bonus factor.

DID YOU DO MUCH IN SARASOTA WHILE YOU WERE HERE, OR JUST EAT, SLEEP AND PLAY TENNIS?

I had a lot of matches, so I didn’t do much sightseeing, but I’m from Wesley Chapel, so I kind of know this area. I’ve been here before. But I mainly just hung out with my friends and enjoyed the week.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN SADDLEBROOK?

We don’t live there full time; we just train there in the off-season. We have a place there, but I think since 2004 we come back in November and December to spend the off-season there.

WHY AND WHEN DID YOU FIRST START PLAYING TENNIS?

Both my parents played so I was sort of born into a tennis career. I was 2-years old when I started swinging with a racquet and since then it’s been my passion, my life.

(Note: Alexander Zverev Sr. competed for the Soviet Union and reached a career high of 175 in 1985. Irina Zverev reached 380 in 1993.)

THE PAST COUPLE TIMES YOU’VE COME HERE, YOU’VE HAD YOUR PARENTS AND YOUR BROTHER WITH YOU. DO YOU PREFER THAT, OR TRAVELING ALONE?

Normally I prefer traveling with my family... my brother, my mom and dad are overseas, but I stayed in touch with them everyday and I’ll see them next week again in Munich, so we’re going to re-unite.

WHAT’S IT LIKE WATCHING YOUR LITTLE BROTHER, SASCHA, CLIMB THE RANKINGS?

It’s great, because when he was little; like, 14, 15, and I was playing on the junior tour and all the junior slams, he was always coming with me and I was always thinking “one day he’s going to be better than me.” So far, I still have the best ranking in the family, 45 (2009), but he’s getting close and I hope he’s going to beat that record pretty soon.

WHAT’S IT LIKE WHEN YOU PLAY EACH OTHER?

I love it because if I win it’s great, but if I lose it means he’s good. But I know he hates playing me because I know his game very well. He doesn’t enjoy that.

Ray Collins is the Voice of the Sarasota Open, a local newscaster, and a media consultant. Details at www.RayCollinsMedia.com