



Ray Collins goes

ONE ON ONE

with Ashley Fisher

Ashley Fisher has been in the news lately. The 41-year old former Top 20 doubles player from Australia is the new Coach for the USF Bulls. As a player, Fisher reached the semi-finals of the U.S. Open in doubles in 2006 and won 26 doubles tournaments in his career-including 4 on the ATP tour, with doubles wins over the Bryan Brothers, Nadal and Murray. He played doubles in all four Grand Slams. He and his wife of nine years (Kirsten) and their two little boys (Holden 5, Declan 3), live in St. Petersburg, but Ashley plays in exhibitions around the Sarasota area on a regular basis.



and interviews. It grew from there into a more significant role with Tennis Channel.

Collins: Interesting how the adversity with the knee injury turned into a springboard for you. How did the USF coaching job come about?

Fisher: I have always loved college tennis and recently some close friends of mine have gotten into college coaching. I saw the passion they had and how much they were enjoying it, which reignited my love of the format. I was very fortunate with the assistant role opening up and

Collins: How and when did you first start playing tennis?
Fisher: I was very fortunate to grow up with a tennis court in my backyard. My entire family played and I was four years younger than my closest sibling so at the age of three my family would be playing doubles and I would drag my racquet out and try to hit the ball along the side of the court or against the brick wall.

Collins: When did you realize you were really good?
Fisher: At age sixteen I made a much larger commitment to junior tennis and won eight tournaments, beating players I had never done well against. I saw a significant change in my progress curve and began believing that I had a future in tennis. The moment I realized I could play with anyone was during my first Australian Open in 2000 when I received a doubles wild card and lost 6-4 in the final set to the third ranked team in the world.

Collins: What made you different than other players that didn't excel as you did?
Fisher: I knew I couldn't overpower players, so I had to use my head and make mid-match adjustments. I wasn't concerned with style points and enjoyed being the underdog embracing my unconventional style

Collins: Who were your role models/idols growing up?
Fisher: I was a huge Pat Cash fan as a boy. I watched him win Wimbledon and a Davis Cup final. I was also a big Cricket follower.

Collins: When did you first come to the United States?
Fisher: I visited the United States as a boy on a family vacation when I was ten. It was very "Griswaldy" (movie reference) with the entire family traveling around in rental cars and getting lost daily. I returned in 1994 as an eighteen year old to attend Texas Christian University as a student athlete.

Collins: Broad-brush question--answer it any way you want: What's the biggest difference between the U.S. and Australia?

Fisher: Australia is a much smaller country population-wise and has fewer sporting successes, but those they have are celebrated more. I believe sport bonds and unites people and I have such fond memories of enjoying Australian Victories with 50,000 other fans in Sydney. We have a climate, which is mostly tropical, so sport is possible year round and is a huge part of the country's culture. Athletes are looked upon as national ambassadors and heroes.

Collins: How did you wind up doing tennis announcing?
Fisher: I was in the final of Indianapolis in 2009 and I hurt my knee so badly in the semi final I could barely walk. At some level I believe I needed a distraction from the reality, so the day before the final, which was a rest day for me, and not being able to practice, I volunteered to work the sidelines in the singles semi-finals. I had knee surgery two days later in Palo Alto and being close to the next event in Los Angeles volunteered to do the on court announcing

then one semester later, the head position became vacant.
Collins: What's the best advice you could give amateur players?

Fisher: Enjoy the sport and be proud of the fact that you are exercising. Be open to advice and know that tennis players at every level have areas of their game they are working on and (have) shots they are insecure with.

Collins: Do you have a motto, a philosophy or bumper sticker in your mind for how you live your life?

Fisher: Have a big picture mindset which helps you with perspective. So many times in my life I have looked back and said "I can't believe I was so worked up about that."

Ray Collins is a local newscaster on ABC 7, media consultant, and the "Voice of the Sarasota Open." He lives in Sarasota. Please visit www.RayCollinsMedia.com.

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