

# To

LOOK AT ANDY RODDICK between sets one and two of his first match at the Sony Ericsson Open, in Miami, this past March was to see a man apparently deflated. He sat slumped, his face pointed straight down as if searching for solace in the purple hard court beneath his sneakers. There was no movement save for the occasional twitch of the water bottle dangling from his fingers. He had just lost his first set since bowing out in the second round at his previous tournament, the Pacific Life Open, in Indian Wells, California, an undeniably disappointing result in a season that had seemed, for the most part, overstuffed with promise.

It was the sort of match that, in previous years, Roddick would probably have lost. His talent is unmistakable (hence the 25 singles titles, including the 2003 U.S. Open) and his physical condition is almost peerless (he hired his first full-time traveling trainer in 2001 and has continued to upgrade a massive off-season routine—see “I’d Rather Be Playing Tennis,” page 117), but the American’s mental strength has not always been so certain. While Switzerland’s Roger Federer is implacable, Roddick is the opposite: an effusive, exuberant, extemporaneous bundle of emotion, capable of winning—or losing—a match on the whim of a moment. As his mood goes, so goes the match. At least historically.

There in Miami, Roddick, ranked sixth in the world, had just fumbled the first set against an all-but-unknown opponent—Serbia’s 22-year-old Viktor Troicki, No. 103—and was struggling with the accuracy of his cannon-like serve, trudging around the court in frustration. For all I had heard about a new Roddick still riding the momentum of December’s Davis Cup championship, an energized player who had won two tournaments so far in 2008 and defeated both No. 3 Novak Djokovic and No. 2 Rafael Nadal in the process, I couldn’t help but think I had flown to Miami to witness a familiar sight: Andy Roddick imploding.

The early moments of set two weren’t much better. There was barking, cursing, even a chucked racket. But Roddick fought, improving his service game, and then, up 3-2 and given an opening to break Troicki’s serve, he pounced on a lazy forehand and cracked a sizzling crosscourt winner for the game. He

howled, pumped his fist, and turned to the crowd, which erupted. In the stadium, the momentum shift was visceral.

In the third set, the two players traded holds until Roddick, up 5-4, struck one of the most memorable shots of his career, a no-look backhand flick on a ball that had seemed impossible to reach. Not only did he reach it; he hit it past Troicki into a tiny sliver of open court. The trajectory seemed to defy science. You wondered if Ang Lee was directing. Roddick later called it a “freak-show trick shot.” The next few points hardly mattered. Troicki was finished.

Upon winning, Roddick thrust his arms to the sky. It was a big reaction for a small match and, as the tennis world would find out a few days later, a sign of more to come.

This year, Andy Roddick will not go quietly.

OF COURSE, ONE could take an alternative view: that struggling against a middling player was just a harbinger of the Next Great American’s ongoing fade into mediocrity.

It’s a reasonable sentiment. After bursting onto the global tennis scene with a nuclear serve (world-record speed: 155 miles per hour), a howitzer of a forehand, and a bombastic personality that charmed beat writers and agitated the competition, Roddick rocketed to No. 1 in the world rankings in 2003—then crashed into a wee bit of a brick wall in the form of Roger Federer, a.k.a. the Greatest Player in the History of the Sport. Over the ensuing four years, Roddick lost to Federer 15 of 16 times, including twice in the Wimbledon final. In the past several years, he’s also fallen behind Nadal, the 22-year-old Spanish capri-pants

and, despite rumors of his demise, very much still a force on the ATP Tour. Barring injury, he’s got at least five years of elite tennis left in his body. While he’s unlikely to take the throne back from Federer, Roddick clearly believes he’s going to win more Grand Slam events. And he’s probably right.

Here’s what he says he was really thinking between those sets in Miami, when I was ready to stick a fork in him: “I lost a set 7-5. The guy played great. I served 35 percent first serves. So I was just thinking over stats and telling myself, You know what, this could turn quick, and when it does, it could go fast.”

After dispatching his next two opponents, Czech Ivo Minar and Frenchman Julien Benneteau, to reach the quarterfinals, something momentous happened: Andy Roddick slew the dragon. He beat Roger Federer. And as he did in the match against Troicki, Roddick took some punches. He won the first set, then lost the second, and Federer entered the third in one of his bizarre zombie zones, in which he reels off points by the dozens, hitting shots that mystify and frustrate opponents.

Only this time Roddick hung in. “When he was hitting the shots, I would turn around and walk back [to the service line] and wouldn’t do anything,” he told me later. “I would just go to the next point. As simple as that sounds, that’s literally what I was thinking. I got through a game with three or four break points and all of a sudden he actually froze. I think me actually staying the course gave him the opportunity to make mistakes.”

When reporters swarmed the interview room to ask a very happy Roddick what had pleased

**RODDICK IS AN EFFUSIVE, EXTEMPORANEOUS BUNDLE OF EMOTION, CAPABLE OF WINNING—OR LOSING—A MATCH ON THE WHIM OF A MOMENT. AT LEAST HISTORICALLY.**

enthusiast who dominates the French Open every year; and Djokovic, the lanky 21-year-old Serb who won the Australian Open in January. If you listened to critics—and there were many—Roddick had drifted into the second tier of top pros. He was an athletic player who could make a run at any given tournament but was destined to languish somewhere in the lower half of the top ten.

It seems funny to imagine that someday this trivia question might stump people: Who was the last player to hold the No. 1 ranking before Roger Federer’s epic reign? The answer: Andy Roddick, then 21, now 25

him most about the match, the first thing he said was “I thought I stood the course mentally pretty well.” Pressed to assess the significance of this quarterfinal match, Roddick said, “It’s probably what’s been missing the last two, three years.”

Talk about an understatement.

Taking the long view, the win over Federer in Miami was a sort of tangible proof of something bigger: a slow rebirth that dates back to the Davis Cup title last December, the first for the U.S. since 1995. Entering 2008, Roddick won in San Jose, then won again in Dubai, beating both Nadal and Djokovic. Despite the stumble at the

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Roddick in New York, April 2008. For a video of this photo shoot, go to [outsideline.com/andyroddick](http://outsideline.com/andyroddick).

his commitment to off-court training. He has always been ahead of tennis's fitness curve. Though he's gone through a string of coaches, including, from 2006 until early this year, Jimmy Connors in the role of consultant (Roddick insists they parted amicably after Connors decided he didn't want to endure the travel obligations of the pro tour), he now seems to have settled into a groove with a team composed of his coach/brother, John, 32, and athletic trainer Doug Spreen, 38, hired away from the ATP in 2003.

On a remote practice court in Miami, the day before Roddick would face Federer, I watched Spreen dilute a sports drink, cutting it in half with water so that it "absorbs quicker." Roddick, Spreen said, has two things working against him when it comes to fitness. One is his size: At six-two and 195 pounds, he's taller and thicker than most top pros. The other is a higher-than-normal sweat rate. ("I'm disgusting," Roddick said, pausing to set up his own joke, "which was a real problem with my personal life for a long time.") Because he's losing more fluids than his opponent, Roddick has to make a real effort to stay hydrated. "When I'm training I go through six, seven, eight liters of water just replacing what I need to. It's definitely more effort."

Out on the court, Roddick was blasting balls. "The forehand's coming off good today," he said to his brother. Roddick's forehand, like his serve, is among the best on the tour and requires both strength and resilience—more every year as

**"ANDY'S WORK ETHIC IS INCREDIBLE," SAYS HIS SPORTS-PERFORMANCE COACH. "ONLY A HANDFUL OF TENNIS PLAYERS COME CLOSE TO WHAT HE DOES OFF THE COURT."**

Pacific Life Open, he arrived in Miami feeling as sharp as he had in years. One reason became clear during the tournament, when news leaked that he'd gotten engaged to his girlfriend, the gorgeous blond *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit model Brooklyn Decker, 21, thus ending his tabloid-covered bachelor years, during which he'd dated, most prominently, Mandy Moore and (allegedly) Maria Sharapova. "I think being happy and content off the court is only going to help in my mind," he told reporters after the Federer match. Another boost came in the form of Federer suddenly appearing, if not vulnerable, then at least less invincible. He'd already stumbled in the early part of the season, losing to Djokovic and Scotsman Andy Murray, and in February he was diagnosed with mononucleosis. In Miami, Roddick would go on to lose in the semifinals to 27-year-old Nikolay Davydenko, but the Russian was by all accounts playing the best tennis of his career. Two days later, Davydenko absolutely smoked Nadal in the final.

"Roddick has matured a lot," says Davis Cup captain Patrick McEnroe. "He still has the same drive and intensity—he just seems more balanced. And that helps him in big matches. I think his chances [in Grand Slam

events] are as good as they've been in years.

So Roddick heads into the meat of this season—to Wimbledon, the hard courts, and his home slam, the U.S. Open—with a new fiancée, a clear mind, and something even more significant: a giant Swiss monkey off his back.

"If I'm serving for a set next time, I'm not going to be thinking, Is this the time? God, please let this be the time," Roddick told me two weeks after his victory, the relief in his voice still palpable. "I think it'll be a little bit more straightforward."

Meaning you've had those thoughts before? "I'd hope you'd call bullshit on me if I said, after losing 11 times in a row, I'm serving for match and that thought didn't creep into my head. That's why I said it was huge mentally for me in Miami."

THAT RODDICK HAS been entrenched in tennis's top ten for most of the past six years (at press time, he was still ranked sixth) without suffering serious injury is pretty solid proof of

players get stronger and faster. "If you're gonna hit 150 balls that much harder in a match, it takes that much more energy," Spreen explained. "And two guys hitting the ball harder at each other means that they've got to move that much quicker to get the ball. They have to be ready to play a more explosive game."

To this end, in 2005 Spreen enlisted the help of Lance Hooton, the Austin-based owner of Hooton Sports Performance Training, an outfit that focuses primarily on what Hooton calls "power-speed athletes." Hooton says Roddick was in excellent shape and, more important, eager. "I can go down a list of phenomenally gifted athletes who are not willing to learn," Hooton says. "Andy is the opposite of that. His work ethic is incredible. I only know a handful of tennis players who even come close to what he does off the court."

Still, some of Roddick's athletic skills were lacking, and his training had been focused on endurance. Hooton set about creating a regimen to build power and

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Roddick serves for broke at the Pacific Life Open, March 2008.

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speed, particularly important for the world's hardest-serving player, whom Hooton calls "the Nolan Ryan of tennis." Hooton stepped up Roddick's weight training, implemented body-weight-resistance programs and plyometrics, and added sprint intervals. The intervals serve to increase his quickness and, as Spreen reminds me at another point, his recovery.

"If you're playing a service game, you go out and you play a 45-second point and you've got 25 seconds before you're serving again," Spreen says. "That's where you get into the interval training: sprint, recover, sprint, recover. You train the body to be stressed and to recover quickly from that stress."

Roddick says tennis's ephemeral off-season (more or less a month



with Christmas sandwiched in the middle) is when he gets the opportunity to "build, build, build." Once tournaments get rolling, he plays so often that his fitness program is highly erratic. Hooton gives the team a number of options for light-, medium-, and high-intensity days and also plans for days on which Roddick should only jog and stretch. "You have to give yourself time to give your body a break," Roddick says. "I've become real particular about that. I have to have windows every couple of months where I can put my body back together." He also makes sure to have

some non-tennis playtime, tearing around Texas's Lake Austin (where he's owned a home since 2003) on his speedboat and trail-running in a nearby wilderness preserve.

"People make fitness out to be this whole specific thing," he says. "But, basically, if you're willing to put in the hours and go through the grind, you're going to be OK."

WHICH LEAVES only one thing: What of the supposedly fragile mind? "You know, you're out there for two or three hours by yourself and you've got to figure it out on your own," says Spreen. Tennis is probably sports' most individual game. Mid-match coaching is illegal. The pro player is utterly alone on that metaphorical island, left to work himself into or out of crises.

## I'd Rather Be Playing Tennis

Off-season for A-Rod? Not really. Check out this three-hour, "medium-to-medium-high-intensity" workout, courtesy of his sports-performance coach, Lance Hooton.

**WARM-UP:** 100 meters each skips, side shuffles, backpedals, and jog.

➤Static stretches, held 20–30 seconds. ➤20 meters each down-and-back A-skips, butt kicks, backward skips, backward runs, lateral walks, crossover walks, lunge walks, power skips, and carioca. ➤10 reps each side leg swings, scissors, eagles, mule kicks, and leg whips. **SPEED:** 6–8 reps each: 20-, 30-, and

40-meter sprints. Walk back between reps, rest 3 minutes between sets.

➤Medicine-ball throws (8–10 pounds): 6 reps each overhead back, forward between legs, hip hammer throw (right and left), and squat chest. ➤Holding a seven-foot pole, 10 reps each of 16 different torso-mobility exercises (found in an old Finnish javelin textbook). ➤4 rounds skips and jumps

over 30-inch hurdles. For one, alternately jump a 30-inch hurdle, then laterally duck under a 36-inch hurdle.

➤Easy 400-meter jog on grass, ideally barefoot. **STRENGTH:** ➤Holding dumbbells (25 percent of body weight total), 4 sets of 8 step-ups to an 18-inch box, alternating with 4 sets of 5 pull-ups. ➤Holding a 25-pound plate 6 inches from

chest, 3 sets of 15 reps of walking lunges to Russian twists (lunge to one side, then twist torso to same), alternating with 3 sets of "wipers" (with plate at arm's length, rotate and arc arms from one hip to eye level to other hip).

**COOLDOWN:** 7 minutes of easy stationary biking; protein-and-carbohydrate-rich smoothie; then 10 minutes in an ice bath.





ANDY RODDICK

"It's something we've talked about," says his brother John, who was once ranked sixth in the world as a junior. "When I played I was similar, so I can relate. You want to keep your composure so you [can] give yourself an opportunity to win the match if you're not playing your best tennis. And for the most part he does a good job of that. Sometimes he'll let an umpire get on him or something, and it'll upset him."

But John points out that, at least in his brother's case, there's an upside to the volatility. Roddick is a fiery athlete who feeds on emotion. He's never going to be Mr. Cool on the court, and it wouldn't make sense to ask him to try. "If Andy just bottled everything up, he wouldn't be able to play very well," John says. "He's gotta let that out. To be honest, him getting a little upset on the court is not something we tend to focus on."

In fact, they let Roddick work things out all by himself. The team never hired a sports psychologist or attempted to mix any specific mental training into his routine.

"I think it's just experience," says Roddick. "You've done it before" — lost your shit, he means — "and maybe you can handle it a little more. But I don't think I'm ever going to be one of these guys who can just mute it."

He tells me this on a beautiful April day in New York City, where he's come to help his fiancée move them into a new Manhattan pied-à-terre. He's fresh off a convincing Davis Cup quarterfinal win over France and has been instructed by Spree and John to leave the racket in its holster for a few days. But Roddick is set to meet with Patrick McEnroe in the morning, which he says has him "jonesing" to hit some balls. "It'll be hard not to play tomorrow," he says.

Roddick's publicist and sister-in-law, Ginger, who's been escorting him to interviews, gives him a look. "Do something else," she pleads.

Roddick looks right back: "I'm not good at anything else." ○

JOSH DEAN WROTE ABOUT SKIING IN IRAN IN AUGUST 2007.

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humanity. Intellectually, that's very satisfying to me. I suppose it's kind of a metaphor for life. Don't you agree?"

THAT'S HARD TO DISPUTE. My only teensy gripe with Carothers's system is that it funnels most of the degrading labor onto one guy: me.

A poo captain's day is long and hard, and it usually begins at first light, when he gets up with the rest of the crew. On this particular expedition, the routine is pretty standard: While Andre, Billie, Milty, Bronco, and Monte fix breakfast and clean the dishes, I focus on my duties as the trip's turd-transport specialist.

I start by rounding up my 16 pee pails — small plastic paint cans, purchased at Home Depot, which I place in front of the passengers' tents every night so they won't have to stumble off to the groover after dark. Then I stuff whatever garbage I can scrounge into a trash bag and drench it with liquid bleach to prevent the *Jackass* from turning into a floating fly farm. Today marks the end of our first week on the river, so I also perform a quick inventory to confirm that we have an adequate supply of toilet paper (one roll per person for every five days), Clorox crystals, hand soap, air freshener, and, most important, empty rocket boxes. (I carry a total of 11 to see us through a 19-day trip, with a one-groover safety margin.) Finally, I check the day-tripper — two smaller ammo cans containing a roll of TP, a jar of hand soap, and about four pounds of Feline Pine kitty litter. This system is for clients who cannot avoid using the toilet during the day.

Around 7:30, as the crew starts dismantling the kitchen, it's time for me to encourage everyone to finish groovering. This is demeaning, but it's also a bit of a power trip. When I yell "Last call on the groover!" what I'm really telling people is "No matter how important you are, I'm about to revoke your bathroom privileges for the next eight hours." It doesn't matter that Steve sits on the board of the New York Stock Exchange or that Maureen is a highly placed official at the Commerce Department. It also doesn't matter that Ben pounds nails in Portland or that Emily, who runs a crane at the docks in Port Arthur, Texas, has been saving pennies for most of her adult life to afford this trip. In the eyes of the groover, everyone is created equal.

Everyone except me, of course. When the passengers are finished, I'm the guy who gets to grab a guide, dash up through the tamarisk trees, and break down the system.

If the groover is getting full, I lift it and drop it on the sand a time or two to "settle" things — being extremely careful not to compress the contents too tightly. (After baking in the sun for another two weeks, the contents of a compressed rocket box can cement to form what we call poo glue, which will be almost impossible to remove at the Wildcat Hill Wastewater Treatment Plant, in Flagstaff.) Then I shower the inside with a furious deluge of Clorox crystals, which helps beat back the odor. We cart the toilet seat down to the river with the riser and urine bucket, where the urine is dumped in the water and all components get a thorough scrubbing. Finally, we seal the lid and begin the Morning Poo Parade.

This can be embarrassing. As we haul our load toward the beach, the passengers spot us coming and conversation often grinds to a halt. Someone might break the silence with a remark such as "Stand back, here comes Groover Boy!" Other times, there is a subdued chuckle punctuated with a joke like "Hey, did you know that Grand Canyon poop boatmen never die — they just smell that way?"

Ha-ha, I laugh, *that's really funny*. Then I pretend to stumble, which sends everyone running down the beach screaming.

As the guides hoist the components onto my front deck, I leap aboard and start tying everything down, often rigging double and triple backups to ensure that nothing goes flying out. It's a complex operation — I use nearly 40 cam straps to properly anchor the pee bucket, the 16 pee pails, the riser, the three bags of toilet paper, the garbage, the groover seat, and the rocket boxes, plus all my Clorox and cleaning supplies.

When the lashing is done, I'm surrounded by a mountain of trash and toilet products. You're probably familiar with those wheeled carts used



#### GROOVER BOY

current state of affairs looks and sounds like failure. But on a night like this, as I lie on my boat floating in an eddy at the bottom of the canyon, with Jupiter's lantern swinging in the sky, it doesn't quite *feel* like failure.

Granted, I have spent some truly miserable moments on the river. But those ordeals have also been leavened by moments of simple, unvarnished perfection. I have seen summer thunderstorms send dozens of waterfalls simultaneously plummeting from the rimrock to the river. I've rowed past bighorn rams battling each other on the cliffs, the sound of their head-knocks echoing off the stone. I've napped on beds of columbine and hellebore orchids, and gazed at the turquoise waters bubbling from the subterranean pool that the Hopi believe to be the wellspring of life.

Those are wondrous things, to be sure. But the real reason I don't feel like a complete loser has less to do with the gifts that I've been given and more to do with what's been taken away. By stripping most of my pride, my apprenticeship has laid bare one of the more intriguing paradoxes of the Grand Canyon: the fact that this place has the power to render a person not only profoundly diminished but also radically expanded, often in the same breath. Of the many things that the canyon and the river supposedly offer, this may be the purest of them all.

So, yes, it's true: If I keep at this baggage-boat gig for a few more years, I may someday enjoy the privilege of rowing actual passengers down the Grand Canyon. In the meantime, the *Jackass* needs a captain—a role that commands, in my experience, an unexpected dimension of dignity and even a measure of grace. It's a job whose principal dividend, I suppose, is a subdued and somewhat battered frame of mind that, as the moon prepares to rise over the rim and the night cups the river in its hands, feels almost like happiness. ○

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR KEVIN FEDARKO WROTE ABOUT EVEREST BASE CAMP IN JULY 2007.

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of their heroes fall—Basso, Pantani, Heras, Hamilton, Landis, Ullrich, Vinokourov, Rasmussen. The fans want to believe that that was then and this is now—that cycling is cleaning up. But after a particularly bad doping year in 2007, one could be forgiven for maintaining a certain amount of skepticism about the newest fix. Even Catlin, while praising Slipstream's efforts, sees room for improvement in any system in which only the UCI or the teams control who sees the test results and who gets sanctioned.

"What kind of tests are they using?" he said when I asked him to assess the biological-passport programs. "Some markers are better than others. Also, who is monitoring the data and making the decisions?"

Indeed, aside from ACE, Vaughters and team doctor Prentice Steffen are the only people who see the results and make decisions for Slipstream. To be fair, though, Steffen, the former team doctor for U.S. Postal, has been such an outspoken critic of cycling's doping culture that, for a period, he had difficulty finding work in the sport.

As for the UCI program, keep two things in mind: (1) This is the same organization that has already done a less than fabulous job of keeping the sport clean for the past century, and (2) the new program—involving more than 800 cyclists getting tested 16 times each in 2008, eight times before July alone—was only announced in October and launched in January. It would be understandable if a few bugs remained.

Still, by the end of April, the UCI claimed to have conducted 2,172 tests, of which 23 warranted further analysis. In early May, the UCI announced that one of those would likely lead to a suspension, the first rider to be snagged under the new program.

Catlin still has concerns. "The testing program looks at levels at random points in time," he said. "There are drugs that are here and gone in a few hours. Still, what Slipstream is doing is definitely an improvement. What I like about these programs is that they have the ability to help change the culture."

No system is foolproof, of course, especially in a world where the dopers are always a couple of steps ahead of the testers, and where the financial rewards of successful cheating are huge. Cycling's recent history doesn't inspire confidence in any system that asks fans to trust that team managers and the UCI are telling the truth.

But my time with Slipstream suggested that this team and its example may actually be changing a culture that has accepted and even encouraged doping. Of course, I had no prior knowledge of what professional cyclists act like during their off-hours—the Slipstream guys could have been donning robes and sacrificing rabbits when I wasn't around. But I can report that their hotel-room doors were open more often than not and that the only things the *soigneurs* delivered were laundered uniforms for the next day. The eight riders at the Tour of California (all Americans, except for Millar) look like an indie rock band after sound check—wool hats pulled over their ears, backward ball caps, long hair. They talk about girls, music, and notable bowel movements. They are typical young American men from places like Salt Lake City, Lemont, Illinois, and North Bend, Washington.

Vaughters has made community and connectedness a big part of his attempt to eliminate secrecy. At a November training camp in Boulder, Colorado, he brought in a corporate consultant who made riders split into groups and talk about effective communication techniques. They took psychological surveys, helped each other up and down the walls at a rock-climbing gym, and partied together in Boulder clubs. "We were a new team," Vaughters said, "so before we did the serious work, we needed to understand everyone, what their personalities were about, how to function as a group."

While cyclists on most teams live apart, training on their own or with the help of private doctors and advisers, most of the 25 Slipstream riders live and train in Girona, Spain, which makes it easier to