

# QUESTION AND ANSWER: TIM SMYCZEK

Joey Hanf - tennisnerds.com

Sept 11, 2013



As many of our readers know, Tim Smyczek is one of our favorite players. We were able to support him in his epic third round encounter against Marcel Granollers. He's done so much for us at The Tennis Nerds, and he's back again. He is the second American Man in this installment of our Q and A series. He gave us some incredibly good answers and even though it was through email, it was the greatest interview I've been apart of. We hope you enjoy this as much as we do!

Player: Tim Smyczek (USA)

Height: 5'9

Current Ranking: 104

Turned Professional: 2006

**When you're playing in front of crowds that are going crazy in support of you, how does it affect you and your game? Does it inspire you? Do you get nervous?**

I think a supportive crowd can only help you. It's inspirational. I had some great crowds my first two rounds of the Open this year, but nothing could compare to the third round. From the moment I walked onto the Grandstand I could feel them carrying me. I told someone last week that I've never had to play with goosebumps for so long. They were doing the wave during changeovers, chanting "USA, USA" and "SMY-CZEK." I had so much adrenaline pumping. In a long five setter I never felt tired and I was so wired after the match that I don't think I got to sleep until about 5am.

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**I recently found out that as a Junior player you often played doubles with your coach, Billy Heiser. First off, that is so cool. Second, how is your relationship with Billy as your coach? Does the fact that you guys competed together in the past help or hurt the way you're coached?**

Billy has been my best friend for a long time. I first played him in a tournament in East Lansing, Michigan when I was 10 or 11 and we had a three set battle. When we first started working together last summer, it was a little bit difficult to navigate our relationship because we were going from being best friends to player/coach. I had trouble telling him to do things at first, and I'm sure he struggled with the same things. But in the long run I think it has helped us to be so close. We've gotten good at compartmentalizing. It's a lonely life out on tour and it helps to have your best friend with you.

**Speaking of the Juniors, you had quite a bit of success in the ITF's as a young kid. You got up to a career high #14 in 2005. What challenges did you face in translating Junior success to making it on the professional tour?**

Tennis at the professional level is just a different game than at the junior level. It was nice to play all of the grand slams as a junior, and when I got to them at the professional level it was helpful to have seen the sights and played on the courts, but for me that's really where it ended. Unfortunately, I came out of the juniors thinking that making it in the pros would be easy. Needless to say, I was in for a rude awakening.

**At 25, you can't really be called a "young gun", but with so many guys 30+ having great results, how excited are you for the rest of your career? Do you think tennis really is getting "older"?**

Absolutely. I think I saw a stat that said there were 10 players 30 or older in the round of 32 at the US Open. That's pretty incredible. Doing really well at a young age is becoming more and more rare. I think I saw another stat that said there are no players under 20 in the top 200. It's really inspiring to see some players playing their best tennis later on in their careers, as well as extending their careers well into their 30's. I think that's definitely the direction that tennis is going at the moment. I've developed later than a lot of other players and I'm really excited for this next stage in my career.

**You've been asked this repeatedly over the last week and a half, but how does reaching the third round of a grand slam for the first time give you confidence for the rest of the year?**

It was incredible to reach the third round. It just instills some belief in myself and reinforces what I've been trying to convince myself of for a long time. I'm hitting the ball great, but competing even better. Winning a tough four setter and then coming back and winning a four hour five setter gives me a lot of confidence in my physical condition. I'm looking forward to playing five or six more tournaments this year and really continuing to compete and improve and set myself up for next year.

**You're a short guy. You've said in the past that one of your strengths is your speed. Were you a great natural athlete growing up, or did you have to work more in the weight room and off the court to improve your quickness?**

I've been blessed with some athleticism, but being a small guy I have a lot to make up for and I spend a lot of time in the gym and on the field. I've been fortunate to have had some great strength and speed coaches, most of all Jason Riley at the Performance Compound in Tampa.

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**You're up to 104 in this weeks rankings, and you've been as high as 101. How much would it mean to you to break the top 100?**

It's been my goal for as long as I can remember to break into the top 100. Earlier this year, I'm pretty sure I was one ranking point from being number 99. It would mean a lot to reach that milestone, but at this point I'm really trying to focus more on improving certain parts of my game and setting my sights even higher.

**If given a Wildcard, you said you will be playing the Napa challenger starting September 21st. With your current ranking, how do you decide when to enter ATP World Tour events, and when to enter Challengers?**

A lot of it depends on which tournaments I get into without having to play qualifying. Also, two of the challengers in California are 100K's so there are some good opportunities to make some valuable points.

**What are some short and long term goals you have set for yourself? And what parts of your game are you trying to improve the most?**

Short term, I want to ensure I'm in the main draw of the Australian Open. Long term I want to set myself up for a long career and stay healthy enough to play into my 30's. Watching Ferrer and Haas and some of these other guys who are playing so well late in their careers gives me hope.

**And finally, a fun one. What is your favorite tournament(I hope you say New York or San Jose...) and where is the best place to eat at that tournament?**

New York is definitely my favorite place to play. I'll never forget the feeling of having so many people pulling for me last week. I've eaten at this place La Esquina a couple of times there which has incredible Mexican food. San Jose will always be special to me because it was the first ATP tournament I qualified for. Indian Wells has to be my other favorite tournament. It's one of the most player friendly tournaments of the year. Finally, it'd be silly not to mention the Australian Open. They know how to put on a tournament in Melbourne. (And the buffet at the Hyatt is probably the best breakfast of the year.)

We want to give a huge thanks to Tim for his great, articulate answers and for everything he's done for our blog. I've said it before and I'll say it again: Tim Smyczek is everything an American should strive to be.