

MILOS RAONIC

THE MILD-MANNERED MISSILE

Possessed with a lethal arsenal of weapons and schoolboy sincerity, Milos Raonic might be Canada's greatest ambassador of tennis.

BY CHRIS ODDO





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Milos Raonic [Canada]

MIL-osh Rau-nitch

Born | 12/27/90 [age 20]

Hometown | Podgorica, Montenegro

Resides | Thornhill, Ontario, Canada

Height | 6' 5"

Weight | 198 lbs

Turned Pro | 2008

Plays | right-handed

Current Ranking | 26 [5/9/11]

Coach | Galo Blanco

Favorite Surface | Hardcourt

Favorite Shots | Serve & Overhead

Family | Parents: Dusan and Vesna, Sister: Jelena, Brother: Momir

Tennis Idol | Pete Sampras

Favorite Movie | "The Hangover" and "Due Date."

Least favorite music | Hardcore rap

***Fastest serve** | 152 mph in Davis Cup 2011

AS AN 8-YEAR-OLD, MILOS RAONIC WOULD STAY UP ALL NIGHT watching his hero Pete Sampras play in the Australian Open several time zones away. When the match would finish, he would watch them again on videotape to better understand the tactical elements of tennis. He calls it his "addict" stage, a time where too much tennis was never enough.

"I think tennis is an amazing sport," says Raonic, "I grew up loving it, and it wasn't as much of a love as it was an obsession. It was the only thing I wanted to do."

These days, growing legions of tennis fans are starting to watch Milos with similar enthusiasm, but the Thornhill, Ontario resident hopes that one day the kids of Canada will do more than watch. He wants them to play, too. Even though he's been

preoccupied in 2011 with winning his first ATP title and becoming the highest-ranked Canadian tennis player – ever - he still finds time to champion the cause.

"I hope that parents and kids see what's possible in tennis," he says, "There's no reason why there shouldn't be a few Canadians at the top of men's and women's tennis."

Raonic's rare combo of a red-lined game and a blue-collar work ethic make him a perfect player to build the new Tennis Canada.

Core Values

Raonic's sudden rise in the tennis rankings has been well-documented this year, but the 6-foot-5 power-server remains modest.

"It's easy to get carried away, and it's easy to get your ego too big and all these kinds of things," says the soft-spoken Raonic, whose voice tends to crack when he speaks. "I just want to stay humble about everything. I've made the results that I have because I was levelheaded. I want to stay that way, because it was one of the reasons that I played so well, and I think that's going to be a very important thing for myself and my career."

In some aspects, success changed the landscape of Raonic's life. When the 20-year-old isn't playing, he's involved in media appearances across Canada, signing endorsement deals and sifting through fan mail. But success

hasn't changed Raonic the person.

"Of course success changes everybody," he says, "but it's my job as well as my team around me, my parents, my family and friends to keep me down-to-earth as much as possible. I don't think I'll be getting too far if I start thinking too much of myself."

Raonic thanks his parents for their support and is quick to credit them for his success. He says the best lesson that they taught him is respect.

"They taught it to my brother, my sister and myself. My sister is teaching it now to her kids, to my niece and nephew. Respect, work ethic, don't take anything for granted."

What's Next

In a recent nationally televised segment with CBC, an interviewer asked Raonic about a questionnaire he had completed when he was 13 years old. As a teenager he stated his goal was to be the No. 1 singles player on the ATP Tour. The reporter asked Milos if he had the same dreams today, seven years later.

"That's never going to change," said Raonic, "and I promise you that nobody's going to put more sweat and effort and grit into getting there than I will. I don't mind doing the work, and I know I want it."

Milos is more concerned with training and improving as an overall athlete than a specific ranking.

"I'm not thinking about the numbers – what number is next to my name," he says. "I really want to focus on trying to keep this level throughout the whole year and trying to keep getting better and developing and progressing as a player and as a human being."

In spite of his breakout season, the cerebral up-and-comer with a blistering 152 mph* serve remains eager to analyze his flaws alongside his coach Galo Blanco. Raonic cites Blanco's dedication to coaching as the main motivation to improve. Blanco, a Spaniard who reached an ATP ranking of No. 40 and the quarterfinals of the 1997 French Open, tells Milos about his regrets of becoming complacent. Raonic appreciates Blanco's wisdom.

"I want to win as much as possible," says Raonic. "I want to reach new limits. I want to keep improving."

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Photo credit: Lando