

Moving Up

Despite Loss, Ginepri shows he's a true contender

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NEW YORK (AP) -- Robby Ginepri always had the talent. Now he's finally getting the most out of it.

Though Ginepri lost to Andre Agassi in a five-setter Saturday, his run to the U.S. Open semifinals capped a breakthrough summer. After winning his second career title last month in Indianapolis, Ginepri knocked off three seeded players -- No. 29 Tommy Haas, No. 13 Richard Gasquet and No. 8 Guillermo Coria -- to reach the semifinals.

Agassi won 6-4, 5-7, 6-3, 4-6, 6-3.

"He's come a long way," said Agassi, who had never dropped a set to Ginepri in their previous three matches. "If anything, I used to say that he was irresponsible with his talent. ... Now, you really see his patience, his thought process out there. He's taking calculated risks, and he knows when to lay off the ball, when to work it, when to step up and take a chance.

"He's playing a lot smarter," Agassi added, "which doesn't give you those free points that make the difference."

Much has been expected of Ginepri since 2000, when he was runner-up for the junior boys title at the Open to Andy Roddick. But whether it was being away from home and his friends or all the time he spent on the road, he was never able to capitalize on that potential.



Much has been expected of Robby Ginepri since 2000, when he was runner-up for the junior boys title at the Open to Andy Roddick.

He climbed to No. 25 in the rankings on Feb. 2, 2004, but had plummeted back down to 103 on July 4.

"I wasn't reaching my goals and my potential in the game of tennis," said the 22-year-old, who was born in Marietta, Ga., and now lives in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. "I'm starting to realize to be the best, you have to work your butt off every single day, and days can't go by where you're upset about something. You can't let that affect the way you play."

But things began turning around after a first-round loss at Wimbledon. The next month in Indianapolis, he beat Roddick in the quarters on his way to winning the title. He made it to the quarters in Los Angeles and Cincinnati, where he beat Marat Safin to set up a meeting with No. 1 Roger Federer.

Though Federer won the semifinal match 4-6, 7-5, 6-4, Ginepri made him work for it.

He was even more impressive at the Open, where he became the first man in the Open era to play four straight five-setters.

"He had a wonderful tournament," said Francisco Montana, Ginepri's coach. "I think playing Andre was an invaluable experience for Robby and he matured again, more so in this match than in the last couple of weeks.

He was down a set to Agassi twice, rebounding each time to even the match. Agassi was finally too much in the fifth set, breaking Ginepri and then holding serve to go up 5-2. Ginepri held his own before Agassi served out the match at love with a 120-mph ace.

"I can hang with any player," Ginepri said when asked what he learned at the Open. "I shouldn't be intimidated or afraid to walk on the court with anybody. My confidence has been pretty high, and my work ethic has definitely been up there. With that said, it definitely enlightens the future for me."

His father also thought his performances this tournament bode well for his future.

"There was a little letdown because Robby probably had his chances there, but Andre is Andre and this is Robby's first semifinal," Rene Ginepri said. "I think it's a great learning experience for him and I think he will nurture from it. Kudos to Robby for getting here and it was a wonderful challenge."

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