

Reading comprehension

Sports Superstar!



Spanish tennis player Rafael Nadal - or "Rafa" as he is known to his fans - is one of the most interesting characters in sport today. When playing tennis, Rafa is fierce, fearless and confident. Sports journalists describe him as looking like an angry bull on court - eyebrows raised, lips curled, eyes burning a hole in his opponent. Yet, off court, Rafa is shy, sensitive and uncertain. He is afraid of dogs, spiders, and thunder and lightning. He is even afraid of sleeping in the dark!

It seems strange that a 6ft 1in, 85kg muscular athlete who is so confident on court, could be so unsure in real life. Rafa, the tennis player, is famous for his mental toughness, physical strength and aggressive playing style. His opponents know he will fight for every single point. His fans love the fact that he never gives up. However, the off-court Rafa is gentle and modest. Everyone who meets him says the same thing: he is 'educado', as they say in Spanish. Not so much educated in the formal sense (Rafa left school when he turned professional at 15), but educated in manners and character. Rafa is polite and respectful to everyone he meets. Indeed, even though Rafa is one of the best players in tennis history, he is probably the most humble No. 1 the game has ever known.

Rafa's fans also love his distinctive style. When Rafa first started playing professional tennis, he wore baggy, sleeveless shirts (that were always in very vivid colours), three-quarter length trousers and bandanas. Sports journalists said he looked like a pirate! No other player dressed like him. These days, Rafa sports a more traditional style. He wears a polo shirt and shorts cut above the knee - just like the rest of the players on tour. But he is still distinctive. His shirts are almost always tight-fitting. He also wears tennis shoes that have his nickname "Rafa" on the right shoe and a picture of a bull on the left. Yet, even during the early days of his career when he dressed so distinctively on court, Rafa has always dressed normally - even conservatively - off court. Rafa's everyday clothes are shirts and V-neck sweaters. At parties he often wears a blazer. Rafa's dual personality and style has always been one of the most appealing things about him!

- 1 Rafael Nadal has a fear of storms and sleeping without a light on.
- 2 Rafa often gets into fights with opponents when he loses a single point.
- 3 Rafa has been playing tennis since the age of 15.
- 4 At the start of his career, sports journalists didn't think Rafa dressed like a tennis player.
- 5 Nowadays, Rafa wears sports clothes that more reflect his off-court style.