

If you were one of the folks lucky enough to have had the patience to last the 6 hours 40 minutes of television coverage required to have watched the Men's Wimbledon Championship (4 hours 48 minutes of tennis and some rain delays), then you witnessed what was probably the greatest Grand Slam Final of all time. You know our guy Hiko was tuned in. And in his latest, he talks about Federer/Nadal, Serena/Venus, and makes some Moot Points about this year's Wimbledon in general.



Times like this remind me why I love sport.

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Movies are nice. Some are great, some are not so good... but almost all are predictable. Every once in a while you get a movie that pulls a clever twist on you, and you appreciate the fact that your expectations were deceived (or maybe you don't).

But, in sport, the outcome is much less contrived. Sure, watching a sporting event

is like watching a movie, because you're just as likely to get a bomb as you are to get a classic. Most end up in the gray area of mediocrity. Still, in movies, the good guy almost always wins, and the bad guy almost always gets harpooned by demons. That cannot be said in sports. The good guy (at least, the guy you deem "good") often loses. Some of them lose so much it feels like a happy ending is an impossibility (see: Browns, Cleveland, 1999-2006).

Sport is real. Things don't always turn out the way you want, but you watch anyway, hoping, sometimes praying, for that moment in time, that triumph of the will, that superhuman effort that becomes legend, the type of event that seems more like a movie than reality.

That is why, for me, manufactured entertainment will always take a back seat to sports.

This year we have been fortunate. We've witnessed what could arguably be called the Greatest Superbowl of All Time, the Greatest US Open of All Time, and now the Greatest Wimbledon Final of All Time. Name the last year that 3 movies got released that you could justifiably argue were amongst the "Greatest of All Time". Good luck on that.

### ~~~Men's Final

I need not recap the Men's Championship for you in detail. Rafael Nadal beat Roger Federer 9-7 in the 5<sup>th</sup> Set. He was broken only once in the entire match (in a set he went on to win), and yet got pushed to the brink regardless. Federer was vying for his 6<sup>th</sup> Wimbledon crown in a row, and was finally vanquished, but I don't know how anyone with an IQ above 20 could argue that he's diminished. Not the way he played, the way he fought, the way he held off 2 match points in the 4<sup>th</sup> Set Tiebreaker, the way he won that set and forced the 5<sup>th</sup>

, the way he held off Nadal time and again until finally the miracles ran out.

And Nadal, up 2 sets to 0, losing the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> sets in Tiebreakers, having to face down internal demons and one of the greatest tennis players of all time, serving from behind, knowing that if he were broken that the match was over, but if he broke Federer, he'd still have to serve it out. Once they reached the 5<sup>th</sup>

Set, there wasn't one moment that I thought Nadal would win... until he did.

The intensity of the moment and the place and the players and the crowd. If you aren't a tennis fan, I beseech you, do whatever you have to do to watch it; please find it online or borrow a tape from a friend. I want to convert you. I am the Jehovah's Witness of tennis.

Federer hasn't declined. Nadal has just gotten better. They are clearly the two best players in men's tennis, and already headed for one of the best rivalries of all time - in any sport. And they're both young enough where we should be able to watch them fight it out to the death for several more years. Bully for us.

~~~**Women's Final**

This one featured Venus Williams versus Serena Williams. Generally, I detest when the Williams sisters play in Grand Slam Finals, because their quality of tennis dips and the match usually sucks groundhogs. However, this was the best All-Williams Final I've seen, as there were several moments when they really went at each other, demonstrating why they are by a wide margin the two best athletes in women's tennis. There were points where they played women's tennis like it has never been contested before. Venus and Serena had fastest serves of 129 mph and 121 respectively. Federer and Nadal had high serves of 129 and 120.

It made you wonder what it would be like if they weren't sisters, or they didn't mind beating each other, or if one of them slept with the other's boyfriend. If they really and truly forgot that they didn't want to hurt each other's feelings and wanted to rip the living hell out of their opponent. If they would claw at each other's eyes during the changover. It could make for the best tennis the women's game has ever seen.

As it is, the sisters have a match that is on-again off-again, brilliant and hard to watch. In the end, one celebrates perfunctorily, the other shrugs and looks somewhat dismayed, they hug, they smile, they wave, and you, the viewer, feel unfulfilled.

Still, it was clear that Venus was the better player on that day. She's the Queen of Grass - this makes 5 Wimbledon championships now. She's getting up there into rarified air.

### ~~~Picks

I chose Nadal and Ana Ivanovic as my champs, and one out of two ain't bad, even though it was hardly a stretch to pick Rafa since he'd just mauled Federer at the French. Ana, on the other hand, was beaten down in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Round by a player out of the Top 100, so apparently that pick wasn't sound. Still, I did say that only 4 women had a shot to win, and 2 of them ended up in the Finals, so I wasn't totally on crack.

Accompany that with my Cavs picks this year (Cavs over Wash in 6, Celts over Cavs in 7), and I'm starting to feel good about that 15 to 1 Browns Superbowl Victory ticket I had my girlfriend pick up for me in Vegas as a lark.

### ~~~Players

## Wimbledon props go out to:

*Marat Safin*, a former Grand Slam champion who had been circling the toilet for years, but miraculously found his game enough to get all the way to the Semifinals, kicking the intestines out of walking ingrown toenail Novak Djokovic on the way (pronounced Choke-o-vitch).

*Zheng Jie*, the Chinese wild card that took out Ivanovic and two more seeds on her way to a close Semifinal loss against Serena. She made a fan out of me. She may be little, but she's strong. Her first baby, it came out sideways. She didn't scream or nuthin'.

*Aggie Radwanska*, the 14<sup>th</sup> ranked Pole who, despite having absolutely no real weapons in her game, still manages to find her way into the 2  
nd

week of these things. She thankfully took out Svetlana Kuznetsova before also bowing out to Serena in the Quarters.

*Rainer Schuettler*, some German dude I've never heard of before, and probably never will again. But he made the Semis of Wimbledon this year, taking out James Blake on the way.

*Nicole Pietrangeli*, for looking extremely hot, or, [as Justin Gimelstob put it](#), "very well put together". Oh, and making the Quarterfinals.

*Andy Murray*, the skinny Scot that rocked Center Court with his 2 Sets down comeback to beat Richard Gasquet, skipping him into the Quarters (where Nadal was unmerciful).

And I guess I'd be unfair if I didn't give some begrudged respect to *Horseface* (she sometimes goes by her nickname, Elena Dementieva). She somehow made it to the Wimbledon Semifinals despite having no serve whatsoever on a surface

which demands good serving. I don't know how she does it - I just wish she would stop.

Bronx Cheers for:

*Ana Ivanovic*, for reasons I've mentioned before. Obviously, grass is not her best surface. But, for God's sake, girl, you the #1 seed. You #1 in the world. You can't go get your ass beaten by some little Chinese girl ranked #133. It's unseemly.

O *Choke-o-vich*, I mock thee. Your early and humiliating exit made me the opposite of sad.

*Nikolay Davydenko*, your woeful comb-over is probably why you lost in the 1  
Round.

st

*Maria Sharapova*, who lost to #154 ranked Alla Kudryavtseva in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round. It's clear that Alla has enough game to be ranked much higher, but it was just as clear that Maria's serve is a liability now, and that she's probably the victim of shoulder issues for the second straight year. This is the kind of thing that becomes chronic and ends careers. Rest up, girl. Tennis is better with you in it.

*Andy Roddick*, for being so completely useless as of late.

*Horseface*, for suggesting that the Williams sisters predetermine the outcomes of their Finals against each other.

*Ivo Karlovic*, for being my one Dark Horse bomb, thus making me look bad.

*Horseface* again. I just like throwing her under the bus.

## ~~~**Moot Points**

\*\*ESPN had great coverage of the tourney, but it was most heinous when they had to turn it over to NBC, who would then break away from coverage of live matches to show some completely boring and uncompetitive replay of Venus or Serena beating some random schmoe in a match that had taken place hours and hours ago.

Bad NBC.

But I guess I do have to give them props for sticking with the Men's Final for 7 plus hours of coverage.

**\*\*Mary Carillo has gotten very annoying. She over-emphasizes everything, and repeats herself over and over, saying the same thing over and over, trying to make a point by continually repeating the point that she's trying to make, over and over again, on and on until you just want to shout "I got it! Stop saying it over and over and over again! It's overly repetitious!"**

**\*\***What the sam hell is taking them so long to get that damn roof done over Center Court? The absolute worst thing about tennis is Rain Delays. They're worse than Horseface.

**\*\***Remember the name Alisa Kleybanova. She's one of the Russian horde, an 18 year old with a lot of game. She took out Daniela Hantuchova on her way to losing respectably to Venus Williams in the 4<sup>th</sup> Round, and her serve and groundstrokes are quite good. With some conditioning, she could be a Top 10 player.

**\*\***God bless the Tennis replay system, which is both instant and entertaining, as

well as cutting down on the long-winded whining of the pampered 19 year old brats that populate the tour.

\*\*And now... welcome to the Dead Season. Guess I get to catch up on the movies.

How many days until Training Camp starts?