

Rafael Nadal vs. Novak Djokovic

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COM/170

May 16, 2012

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The rivalry between world number one Novak Djokovic, and ten time grand slam victor Rafael Nadal, has been listed as the third greatest rivalry in the last decade by ATPworldtour.com. There are many reasons why this rivalry has intensified; one being Djokovic having one of the best years in tennis history in 2011. He beat Nadal, Federer, Murray, and anybody else who came in his path. Even though Nadal leads 17-14 in all time matches won, Novak Djokovic is a better player than Nadal, Novak was the most dominant player last season, and won seven out of the last eight matches the two met.

In 2011, Novak Djokovic was the most dominant player in the men's tour, winning ten tournaments, five of them being ATP Masters 1000, and three grand slams. However, the most impressive statistic was his beating the former world number one Rafael Nadal in all six encounters they had in 2011. That aspect of his game for the year adds to an amazing list of feats for the season.

Starting the season by winning the Australian Open led Djokovic to win two more grand slams in 2011. Facing Nadal in both Wimbledon and the US Open, he dismantled Nadal and proved to be greater than Nadal. Many people believed when the clay season began Nadal will dominate again. However, Djokovic beat Nadal in both meetings on clay.

The clay season has always been Nadal's time to shine. Many would say he is the greatest clay court player of all time. Winning the French Open six times, and having a tremendous record of 45-1 in Paris. He has been crowned as the king of clay. The only other person to have such an accomplishment was Former number one Bjorn Borg. Borg won five consecutive Wimbledon titles and six French Open titles. Looking ahead to the 2012 French Open it seems

Nadal might be heading for his seventh French Open title. However in May of 2011, Nadal's 37-match clay court winning streak came to an end when he lost to Djokovic in Madrid. This meant Djokovic's time had arrived, and has his eyes set on winning his first French Open title in 2012.

So far in the 2012 season the two have met just once, their match taking place in Monte Carlo, another clay court. This time the outcome was a little different with Nadal coming out on top. However, Djokovic heard terrible news of his grandfather's death during the tournament, he went on to win three matches, but fell to Nadal in the Final. According to The Telegraph the world number one said he did not have enough emotional energy left in him to continue. Many would say if his grandfather did not pass Djokovic would have gone to beat Nadal a third time on clay.

Djokovic still holds a mental advantage over Nadal. He is the only player who has successfully dominated Nadal. Both players are in tremendous shape, so the real battle is all mental. So far, Djokovic has been winning and still holds a mental advantage over Nadal. However, Nadal has a fighting spirit, which will never give up.

Nadal has been one of the greatest mainly because of his style of play. He catches his opponents off balance then strikes. No one except for Djokovic has figured out how to beat Nadal. Djokovic deciphered Nadal's game-plan and played his own game. Nadal has always been the type of player to stick to his guns; however, when he plays Djokovic he forgets what has gotten him to be so great and plays Novak's game.

Even though Djokovic has dominated Nadal in their previous matches, Nadal still leads in total matches won, 17-14. He has ten grand slams to Djokovic's five, and better win loss ratio. Djokovic's domination began last year, Nadal has been dominating for much longer than him.

However, Djokovic might be his kryptonite, and too deep in Nadal's mind to be beaten.

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