

Djokovic vows to win love with record in view

'When they chant Roger, I hear Novak': Djokovic admits 'toughest' Wimbledon win

AFP | London

Novak Djokovic has vowed to convince fans that he is not public enemy number one even if he surpasses people's champion Roger Federer as the greatest Grand Slam title winner of all time.

The world number one saved two match points to clinch a fifth Wimbledon title and 16th major on Sunday, shattering Federer's bid to become the oldest Grand Slam champion in the longest final ever contested at the tournament.

Despite being outplayed by the 37-year-old Swiss for large parts of the knife-edge encounter, the top seed emerged victorious 7-6 (7/5), 1-6, 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 13-12 (7/3).

At four hours and 57 minutes, it was the longest Wimbledon final and the first to be settled by a final set tiebreak.

Djokovic is the first man in 71 years to win the title from match points down, saving two in the 16th game of the deciding set.

His major title tally is now just two behind Rafael Nadal and four off the all-time men's Grand Slam record of 20 held by Federer.

He has time on his side, being a year younger than Nadal and more than five years younger than the legendary Swiss.

After Sunday's epic triumph, Djokovic revealed he was able to turn the overwhelmingly pro-Federer, 14,000-strong Centre Court crowd in his favour by training his mind.

'They chant Roger, I hear Novak'

"I like to transmute it in a way: When the crowd is chanting 'Roger' I hear 'Novak,'" said the 32-year-old Djokovic.

"It sounds silly, but it is like that."

Djokovic has spent the best part of his career in pursuit of Nadal and Federer and attempting to seduce fans sceptical of his character.

For many he is viewed as too intense, too insincere, too calculating and prone to fads.



Novak Djokovic holds the winner's trophy as runner up Roger Federer looks on



Since the start of 2015, Djokovic has won nine of the 19 majors played with Nadal winning four and Federer three

Federer and Nadal, in comparison, are treated almost reverentially.

"It's hard to not be aware of the crowd. You have that kind of electric atmosphere, that kind of noise," said Djokovic.

"Of course, if you have the majority of the crowd on your side, it helps. When you don't, then you have to find it within, I guess."

Djokovic insists he won't get distracted by the pursuit of Federer's record haul.

"Whether I'm going to be able to do it or not, I don't know. "I'm not really looking at age

as a restriction of any kind for me at least. What I said on the court, I really meant it: Roger really inspires me with his effort at his age.

"It just depends how long I'm going to play, whether I'm going to have a chance to make historic No. 1 or Slams."

When asked if he sees himself still playing at 37, Djokovic said the motivation to be treated with the same respect is strong.

Eventually, hearing screams of "Let's go, Novak, let's go" will be more than welcome.

"Hopefully in five years' time I can be hearing the same chants."

Most consistent of 'Big Three'

Djokovic is by far the most consistent of the 'Big Three' at the Slams.

Since the start of 2015, he has won nine of the 19 majors played with Nadal winning four and Federer three.

The other three have been split between Stan Wawrinka (two) and Andy Murray (one).

On Sunday, Djokovic saved match points in the 16th game of the deciding set, which ran for over two hours and was settled

by a 12-12 tiebreak for the first time in a singles match at the tournament.

It was another display of stunning mental fortitude.

He has been in similar predicaments in the past against Federer -- saving two match points in both of his semi-final victories over the Swiss at the 2010 and 2011 US Opens.

"I just try to never lose self-belief, just stay calm, just focus on trying to get the ball back, return, which wasn't serving me very well today.

"But in the most important moments, all three tiebreaks I guess, I found my best game."

He was off the pace for large parts of the final, only carving out his first break points in the eighth game of the fourth set.

Federer won more points in the match with 218 to 204, broke serve seven times compared to three, hit 25 aces to 10 and 94 winners to Djokovic's 54.

"I thought I could have played better. But the one thing that probably allowed me to come back and save match points and win this match was the mental stability," admitted the champion.



England's Ben Stokes (L) plays a shot with England's Jos Buttler during the 'super over'

Morgan hails 'superhuman' World Cup hero Stokes

AFP | London

Eoin Morgan paid tribute to the "almost superhuman" Ben Stokes after the all-rounder played a pivotal role in England's stunning Super Over win against New Zealand in a thrilling final at Lord's on Sunday.

Morgan's men needed 39 runs off the final 23 balls to win when Chris Woakes holed out but thanks to man-of-the-match Stokes's 84 not out, they tied New Zealand's target of 241 off 50 overs.

He was then chosen to bat the Super Over with Jos Buttler and although both teams scored 15 runs, England won by virtue of scoring more boundaries in the match.

"It's been phenomenal -- people believed because we believed," said Morgan. "It's been an incredible day. Sport is often about fine margins. Today was the finest of margins."

"To come through it was extraordinary, almost a superhuman way to carry the innings. His (Stokes's) partnership with Jos was extraordinary -- everyone back home is hopefully trying to be the next Ben Stokes," Morgan said.

All-rounder Stokes's heroics came three years after he was hit for four straight sixes by Carlos Brathwaite in the last over of West Indies' stunning World Twenty20 final win over England in India.

It also represented a redemption of sorts for the Durham star, born in Christchurch, New Zealand, after a 2017 street brawl and subsequent court case threatened to ruin his career and he wept openly during the jubilant on-field celebrations.

"I said it before but a lot of careers would have been ended after what happened in Calcutta (Kolkata)," said Morgan. "The way he trains, he's an incredible cricketer. Today, he's had a day out."

Morgan admitted he was struggling to take in that England's 44-year wait for a first World Cup crown had at last come to an end after three losing appearances in finals.

"Absolutely unbelievable, I still can't quite believe it," he said. "I thought it was over when Chris Woakes got out but then Liam Plunkett got us back into the game and we had the rub of the green with

Ben's overthrows (a deflection off Stokes's bat went for four overthrows)."

Victory completed four years of painstaking work for Morgan, who captained the side to a humiliating group-stage exit at the 2015 World Cup.

England have since recovered to become the top-ranked side in the world, but were on the

verge of failing to make the semi-finals once more after losing to Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Australia in the group stage.

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EOIN MORGAN

'Gutted' Williamson says World Cup final defeat hard to swallow

AFP | London

Kane Williamson admitted New Zealand's agonising World Cup final defeat against England was "hard to swallow" after his team were beaten on Sunday because they scored less boundaries than the new champions.

"What did they win it on, boundaries? While the emotions are raw it's pretty hard to swallow when two teams work so hard to get to this moment in time," he said.

"We had two attempts to separate us and still couldn't -- it is what it is, the rules are there at the start and they probably never thought they would have to use them."

New Zealand's angst was exacerbated as they also lost the



New Zealand's captain Kane Williamson (R) shakes hands with Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar (L) as he receives his player of the tournament award

2015 World Cup final against Australia and have never won the tournament.

It was especially traumatic for Williamson and company after they twice came close to beating England in the match and then

the Super Over.

"Gutted, obviously. We put in a huge amount of work to get to the final and to pretty much do all we could," he said.

"I have spoken a lot about uncontrollables and there were a

Kiwis praise team but query 'cruel' rules

AFP | Wellington

Heartbroken New Zealanders expressed pride yesterday in the Black Caps' fighting spirit after defeat to England in the Cricket World Cup final, but also bemusement at the obscure rules that cost them the match.

The Black Caps lost even though scores were tied at the end of both regular play

and a Super Over shootout, with England's superior boundary count giving them victory.

As Kiwi fans absorbed a second straight loss in the tournament decider, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was concentrating on the positives.

"That was undeniably an incredible game. I think as a nation we all aged a year in that Super Over," she posted

on social media. "Congratulations to England. And to the Black Caps, I feel nothing but pride. What a team."

But her sports minister Grant Robertson questioned the tie-break method.

"What an extraordinary game. Not sure Super Over is the right end," he tweeted.

"Whatever, NZ you can be so, so proud of this team."

Having only qualified for the semi-finals on net run-rate after finishing level on points with Pakistan, the Black Caps were seen as outsiders in the last four.

But they stunned India in the semi-finals and came within a whisker of stopping England winning their maiden World Cup.