

# Tears flow as curtain comes down on Federer's glittering career

Roger Federer retires after teaming with Rafael Nadal in last match at Laver Cup

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AFP | London

Roger Federer's trophy-laden career ended with defeat on Friday, but for once the result hardly mattered as the Swiss maestro headed into retirement with tears in his eyes and cheers ringing in his ears.

With a sellout crowd of 17,500 at London's O2 Arena willing him on, the 20-time Grand Slam champion returned after more than a year away to play alongside Rafael Nadal, the Spaniard with whom he shared one of tennis's most captivating rivalries.

With the clock past midnight, Federer could have sealed victory in the Laver Cup doubles match when he served at match point in a tense deciding tie-break, but it was not to be as Americans Jack Sock and Frances Tiafoe ripped up the script.

Sock thumped a forehand winner and sealed a 4-6 7-6 11-9 win for Team World. After a brief moment of stunned silence around the packed arena, the crowd rose to salute the 41-year-old Federer, whose elegance, charisma and sportsmanship has graced tennis and transcended sport during a 24-year career.

Federer produced moments of his trademark magic during a fiercely contested duel and kept his emotions in check.

But the tears flowed afterwards as Ellie Goulding sung while a montage of Federer's feats was projected on the black court.

When he was hugged by wife, Mirka, children Leo, Lenny, Myla and Charlene, and his parents Lynette and Robert, there was hardly a dry eye in the house.

"We'll get through this somehow. It's been a wonderful day. I told the guys I'm happy, not sad,"



Team Europe's Roger Federer, front, and Rafael Nadal in action during their Laver Cup doubles match

"We'll get through this somehow. It's been a wonderful day. I told the guys I'm happy, not sad. I enjoyed tying my shoelaces one more time, everything was the last time. Playing with Rafa and having all the legends

ROGER FEDERER

said Federer, who announced last week that this would be his final event after struggling to overcome a knee injury.

"I enjoyed tying my shoelaces one more time, everything was the last time," he added. "Playing with Rafa and having all the legends"

Federer broke down as he thanked his wife.

"She could have stopped me a long, long time ago but she didn't. She kept me going and allowed me to play, so it's amazing - thank you," he said.

Federer's eagerly anticipated final bow came after British favourite Andy Murray had battled against Australian Alex De Minaur for two and a half hours, but lost.

Murray's two Wimbledon titles made him a national sporting icon, but the night was all about Federer - a player who resides in the pantheon of sporting greats with the likes of Pele, Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan and Muhammad Ali.

Even his practice sessions here have been standing-room-only affairs, and an electric atmosphere greeted him as he walked out into the cavernous arena alongside Nadal just after 10pm.

"I've done this thousands of times, but this one feels different. Thank you to everybody who's coming tonight," Federer posted on Twitter earlier in the day.

## Team event

The crowd included Australian



A tearful Roger Federer (SUI) and Rafael Nadal (ESP) look on after his last Laver Cup Tennis match

BETTER YOU KNOW

Over the years, Federer and Nadal showed off individual greatness and compelling contrasts across their 40 matches, 14 at Grand Slam tournaments, nine in major finals: righty vs. lefty, attacker vs. grinder, seeming effortless vs. relentless intensity

great Laver - the man who inspired Federer to create the team competition being staged in London for the first time.

Loud cheers accompanied Federer and Nadal, or 'Fedal' as they are nicknamed, on to court and The Clash's London Calling boomed out as they warmed up.

An even bigger roar went up when Federer punched away a volley in the opening

## Nadal pulls out of Laver Cup after doubles with Federer

Reuters | London

Rafa Nadal has pulled out of the remainder of the Laver Cup due to personal reasons after partnering friend and rival Roger Federer in a doubles match that brought down the curtain on the Swiss great's glittering tennis career.

"Rafael Nadal withdrew for

personal reasons. He will be replaced by Cameron Norrie," the organisers of the tournament said on Saturday.

Nadal is also expecting his first child with wife Mery Perello soon but made the trip to London to play alongside Federer in the Swiss maestro's final professional outing.

game - his first competitive shot since defeat by Hubert Hurkacz at Wimbledon last year ended his dream of a record-extending ninth title on Centre Court.

During changeovers video screens showed iconic moments of Federer's career with tributes from Nadal and his mother.

But this was no exhibition match.

American duo Sock and Tiafoe, pantomime villains for the night, tested Federer's reactions with some lusty blows aimed at the Swiss maestro.

Federer was equal to pretty much everything, his silky shot-making and nimble footwork on show despite a long time away from the court.

pair, with a combined age of 77 and 42 Grand Slam titles between them, edged the opening set by breaking Tiafoe's serve. But the Americans levelled as Federer and Nadal began to fade.

Chants of "Let's go, Roger, let's go" resounded around the packed stands in the championship tiebreak as Federer and Nadal clawed their way towards a victory the occasion demanded.

Even the tennis gods could not intervene to allow Federer one last victory, but nothing could take the gloss off a night to celebrate a player who led tennis into a golden era.

"It still feels like a celebration for me and that's exactly what I hoped for," said Federer, who scaled unprecedented heights and rewrote the record books. "It's been a perfect journey and I would do it all over again."

## Raducanu retires from Korea Open semi-final

AFP | Seoul

Emma Raducanu was forced to retire from her Korea Open semi-final against Jelena Ostapenko due to injury, leaving the Latvian to face second seed Ekaterina Alexandrova in Sunday's final.

The 2021 US Open winner was featuring in her first semi-final since that fairytale triumph at Flushing Meadows, and took the opening set 6-4 after making a flying start on Saturday.

Ostapenko then fought back to level the match, with Raducanu first appearing to struggle with her movement when she was a break up in the second, forcing her to take an off-court medical timeout.

The 19-year old later retired citing a left glute injury when 3-0 down in the decider, ending



Emma Raducanu receives treatment after her confidence-boosting run in Seoul and teeing up a final meeting between the top two seeds.

Indeed, Alexandrova enjoyed a more routine outing in her meeting with Wimbledon semi-finalist Tatjana Maria, downing the German 6-2 6-4 to advance to her second final of the year.

At the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo, meanwhile, Chinese teen-

ager Zheng Qinwen reached her first WTA Tour final with a hard-fought win over world number 13 Veronika Kudermetova.

Having required over three hours to seal her 5-7 6-3 7-6 (7-3) triumph, the world number 36 said: "After the match when I won the last point, the feeling was incredible."

"The opponent, she's playing unbelievable tennis. She has a really good serve and hits the ball hard, she moves well. It's my first time in the final. I'm so happy."

## Torrente wins again in Italy to extend lead in F1H2O title race

TDT | Manama

Team Abu Dhabi's Shaun Torrente extended his lead in the 2022 UIM F1H2O World Championship today with a commanding victory in an incident-packed Grand Prix of Regione Emilia Romagna in Italy.

Torrente produced a flawless performance over the 1,971m Po River circuit in San Nazzaro to follow up his opening round success in France, winning with 10.1 secs to spare from Sweden's defending world champion, Jonas Andersson.

Making it a near perfect day for Team Abu Dhabi, Thani Al Qemzi took the third podium place to retain second spot in the championship standings, 13 points behind Torrente. Finn Alec Weckstrom, France's Peter Morin and Dutchman Ferdinand Zandbergen completed



Shaun Torrente in action

the top six.

After their 1-2 triumph in France, Team Abu Dhabi now look almost unbeatable in their bid to secure a fifth successive F1H2O team title.

Torrente was left at the start as a succession of boats roared past him, but the 2018 and 2019 world champion made a dramatic recovery, powering his way past Selio and the rest into the lead on the first lap.

It seemed that the pattern

for the race was being set, as the American driver resisted attempts by Selio to close the gap, before a series of incidents brought two re-starts and left a succession of Grand Prix casualties.

First, Portugal's Duarte Benavente retired on the 14th of 45 laps with mechanical problems. Ten laps later Selio, who dropped out when leading in France, exited again after damaging the front of his boat.