

## Olympic Tennis Review

Every four years tennis fans get a bonus tournament that carries the weight with the players of a major, the Olympics. This year's Olympics carried a special significance since it was played at the historic All England club about three weeks after the conclusion of Wimbledon. It proved to be a great venue with high energy both from the players and crowd, with all the big names on the men's side playing, with the exception of Rafael Nadal who withdrew with knee problems. Now that the tournament is complete it is time to take a close look at how four medal contenders preformed.

**ANDY MURRAY: A+** Andy Murray finally had the tournament that many fans have been waiting for; he played with confidence and won a big prize, the Olympic gold medal. This achievement is even more impressive considering he did it in his home country at Wimbledon a venue where in the past feeling the pressure and expectations of his home nation he would get tight at big moments. This time Andy handled the pressure, dropping only one set the entire tournament to Marcos Baghdatis. Instead of his usual negative body language and complaining about things like his wrist bands, Andy played with confidence executing his shots with precision and using his serve as a weapon. He stormed into the gold medal match with a convincing 7-5, 7-5 victory over world number two Novak Djokovic. Facing world number one Roger Federer in the gold medal match Murray produced his best performance ever in a major final besting Federer with a score of 6-2, 6-1, 6-4. Andy saved all nine of the break points he faced, and converted 5 of the ten he had. The only moment where his nerves showed was in the third set where he failed to go up a double break in spite of having two points to do so. These nerves did not affect him when he served out the match. In his final service game Murray was anxious to take advantage of the opportunity in front of him served two aces and only allowed Federer one point in the entire game. Will the gold medal be Andy's big breakthrough? Only time will tell but he certainly will be a force to be reckoned with in the upcoming U.S. Open.

**ROGER FEDERER: A** True Federer did not win the gold but the 17 time grand slam champion has nothing to be ashamed of. Federer played with confidence and determination; he really wanted the gold medal and his play showed it. En route to the semifinal Federer dropped one set to Alejandro Falla, a journeyman whose game has always troubled Federer and almost took him out of Wimbledon in the first round two years ago. It was the semifinal of this tournament that was Federer's undoing. Thanks to the no tie-break in the final set rule of the majors Federer was forced to play an almost five hour match that went to 19-17 in the final set against Del Potro to get to the gold medal match. By the time he got there his 30 year old legs did not have the spring or life required to defeat Murray and Federer missed shots he would usually make. Would Murray have won the gold medal match if Federer had been in top condition? Probably but it would have been a much more competitive match. For now Federer will have to settle for the silver and hope for Rio in 2016, he has already stated that it is possible he will play there if he stays healthy.

**JUAN MARTIN DEL POTRO: B** Del Potro the bronze medalist and 2009 U.S. Open champion played well here but came up short against Federer. Del Potro, who missed most of 2010 with a wrist injury, has struggled to recapture the form in major tournaments that helped him win his lone major. Since then all Del Potro's wins have come at the smaller ATP tournaments. At this tournament Del Potro recaptured

some of the old magic producing some big serves and strong ground strokes. True Del Potro came up short against Federer failing to convert a couple match points, but he did win a big match against Djokovic to claim the bronze medal with a score of 7-5, 6-4. Even though Del Potro's legs were comprised by his marathon with Federer he still managed to save all six break points against him and converted on two of the six he had. On paper Djokovic won the match with more impressive statistics than Del Potro, but in the big points the big man came up big and won Argentina's first medal in singles. Hopefully the medal will give Del Potro the confidence he has been lacking since 2010 and he will once again be a factor in the big tournaments.

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC: D-** In 2011 Djokovic put together one of the most impressive seasons in tennis history. During that year he found the confidence to challenge and beat the players who troubled him in the past. His serve and every stroke he possessed became a weapon, and he won the big points. This year his performance has been choppy at best. He defended his Australian open title but lost to Nadal four consecutive times on clay including the French Open final, at Wimbledon he lost in straight sets to Roger Federer in semi-finals without putting up much of a fight. On the court of late he has seemed to lack energy and the negative body language he had leading up to 2011 has returned. The Olympics were no different, true he made it to the bronze medal match but he dropped sets along the way to Italian journeyman Fabio Fognini, and former world number one Lleyton Hewitt whose best days are behind him. During the bronze medal match against Del Potro he was lacking energy and belief. In spite of serving 10 aces, twice as many as Del Potro, and hitting seven more winners than his opponent he was unable to take advantage of Del Potro's tired legs and convert on any of six break points. From his body language I was unable to get a sense that he wanted to win the match or the medal, and he went home empty handed. Given his recent performance it is hard to see Djokovic as much of a threat during the hard court season.

The Olympics is a great bonus tournament for tennis fans and gives us something to watch between Wimbledon and the start of the American hard court season. It was a great tournament and it makes me look forward to the American hard court season even more.