

Breaking Down the Wimbledon 2011 Draw

The Wimbledon draw came out today. Aside from discussions of a rematch of Isner Mahut in the first round the focus of course is on the big four: Federer, Nadal, Djokovic, and hometown favorite Murray. However, there are still 104 other people in the draw and question becomes can one of these people upset one of the big four or will the semis contain all of the big four just as they did at Roland Garros last month. Since we cannot predict the future there is no one way to know the answer for sure but we can make some predications by looking at the draw in more detail.

FIRST QUARTER

This is Nadal's section of the draw. It is true Nadal is coming off winning the French without playing his A game, but to win at Wimbledon he will need to play closer to his A game than he did at Roland Garros. The problem is not with Nadal's game but rather his mindset. Coming into the French Nadal had lost his last four finals, two on clay, to Novak Djokovic. The result was erratic play throughout the first week of the tournament and a grumpy demeanor. However, he managed to overcome all this and win the tournament which should give a big boost to his confidence coming into Wimbledon and allow him to play with more confidence than he did at the French.

There are plenty of dark horses in this section of the draw, but most of them are non-proven entites on grass. So while the potential for an upset exists, it will take one of these players having a great day to pull it off the upset. The two biggest obstacles in this quarter of the draw are a potential third round encounter with up and comer Milos Raonic and a potential fourth round encounter with Juan Martin Del Potro. Of the two I would have to say that Del Potro has the greater chance to pull off the upset but not much greater. Del Potro has done well in his comeback from wrist surgery winning two titles and taking a set off red hot Djokovic in Paris, but grass has never been his strength. This was demonstrated when he went down last week at Queens club in three sets to Adrian Manniario, a French journeyman player. However, Del Potro has always had the game to bother Nadal, and if makes it to the fourth round, has his serve and forehand working he could give Nadal some problems. Raonic is a young gun who has a game that should translate well to grass, but it seems his strength at the moment remains hard courts. This is Raonic's first full year on tour and he has played a lot of tennis, so while he was able to do well in long matches in Australia at the beginning of the year it may be harder to do that now.

Semi Finalist: Nadal

SECOND QUARTER

This is Murray's section of the draw. Murray is coming off his best clay court season ever and a second title at Queen's club. However, he always seems to have trouble performing at Wimbledon, and his quarter of the draw is full of players who have given him trouble at the majors before. To make it to the round of 16 Murray will have to survive a potential third round encounter with Marin Cilic who took him out at the US open in 2009, and a potential fourth round encounter with Richard Gasquet who pushed

him to five sets at Wimbledon in 2008 and last year at the French Open. Murray survived both encounters but Gasquet will be tough test. Should Murray survive both of these tests and make it to the quarter finals he will need to overcome Andy Roddick for a spot in the quarter finals. In 2009 Roddick took out Murray in the semi-finals and it seems like once a player beats Murray at Wimbledon he has trouble overcoming him should they meet again. For this reason I don't think Murray will win this encounter either.

Quarter Finalist: Roddick

THIRD QUARTER

This is Federer's quarter and boy have the tennis god's smiled on him and given him an easy time. Federer is coming off a French Open where he played some of his best tennis on clay and ended Djokovic's perfect season. He may have lost the final to Nadal but he did test Nadal more than he had in their previous three finals at Roland Garros. He withdrew from Halle with a groin injury and to rest so he should be in good shape for Wimbledon.

Like Nadal's quarter Federer's is full of potential dark horses but Federer owns good records against all these players and should overcome them without a problem. The toughest match for Federer could be a potential second round encounter with David Nalbandian, a former finalist at Wimbledon. However, Nalbandian is coming back from an injury layoff and may not be match ready enough to beat Federer. Other potential tough encounters could be a potential fourth round encounter with Tsonga who was a runner up at Queen's last week and pushed Murray to three sets in the final. The problem with Tsonga is he is a streaky player. If he is on a hot streak he could beat Federer but to many times Tsonga goes through patches in matches where his ground strokes and serve can abandon him. If he goes through one of these in his match with Federer, Federer should have little trouble beating him. The most important thing for Federer is to get through his matches quickly, straight sets would be preferable. During some of his longer matches at the French, specifically his semifinal with Djokovic, Federer's legs got tired and his movement suffered. On grass where movement is critical it is important for Federer to get through his matches quickly and have time to recover before the next match.

Semi Finalist: Federer

FOURTH QUARTER

The marquee player in this quarter is the hottest player of 2011, Djokovic. Djokovic is coming off his first loss of the season at the French. During that Match with Federer Djokovic looked tired, shots that were makeable Djokovic did not even move for. It seemed the effects of winning 43 straight matches and having little time to rest was catching up with him. Consequently Djokovic chose to forgo Queens to rest, and played an exhibition this week. It is true that Djokovic has done well in that exhibition but exhibitions are not tournaments, so it is hard to predict anything based on those results. Djokovic has the toughest quarter of the draw, it is full of players that have troubled him in the past and grass is Djokovic weakest surface so it is unlikely he will make it through to the quarterfinals. In the second round Djokovic could face Kevin Anderson, the big serving South African, who has pushed Djokovic in

the past and is due for a win against him. Next up could be Marcos Baghdatis who is not playing terrifically this year but has troubled Djokovic in the majors before and is a better grass player than Djokovic. Should Djokovic make it to the quarter finals he faces a potential encounter with Robin Soderling. Soderling has shown he can pull off big upsets in the majors, and has the game for grass, if Djokovic makes it this far I believe Soderling will upset him.

Semi Finalist: Soderling

Semi Finals: Nadal d. Roddick, Soderling d. Federer

Finals: Nadal d. Soderling