

THE OLYMPICS ISSUE

# TENNIS

INDIA MAGAZINE



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# Joy of A 19 year-old Tennis Fan

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My experience on Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2012

It was a historic day in the tennis world as a Brit, Andy Murray, reached the Wimbledon final after 74 years and the Swiss Maestro Roger Federer was playing to put himself in the record books, yet again.

It was around 7:30 am when I reached Southfields, the nearest tube station for AELTC, where the annual Wimbledon Tennis Championships take place. I was so excited! I was wearing a t-shirt, which said, 'I Love Federer' with a RF logo cap on my head. I was obviously a Roger Federer fan. I love him. I adore him. I worship him. I came out of the station and the two local station guards standing there looked at me and loudly said, "It's going to be Murray, my friend. Go Andy!" I looked at them and just smiled.



With Original Trophies

## The Queue pictures



I started walking towards the club in the slight rain fall. Tiny and big houses as well as rich green fields surrounded the whole area. After walking down a few steps, I saw the AELTC gate and 'The Queue'. As I gathered into the queue, an honorary steward came and handed me the Queue Card.

Finally, I was at Wimbledon. I could not believe.

The night before, I could not sleep well. I was out with my friends, exploring London on our first weekend in the city. I had reached my hostel at 4 AM and slept for just two hours. 6 A.M., I was up and got ready! It took me almost an hour to get from Russell Square to Southfields.

The Queue was such a fine experience!

It was the final day of The Championships, so I was not sure if I could get a pass even after getting into the Queue hours before the sales for Ground Passes start. Finally, after waiting for three and half hours, I was able to get a Ground Pass in my hand. I was so happy!

I was in.

Similar sights, like those on TV and things I had read, were in front of me now. Centre Court, schedule board, mini Wimbledon shops and people everywhere!

I could not wipe off the huge smile on my face.

Six months ago, when I had applied to acquire tickets through Public Ballot, I was unsuccessful. However, today I was actually at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club!

I followed the direction boards and went to Aorangi Terrace. Yes! The famous Henman Hill / Murray Mound. Thousands of people were there on the field,

facing the giant screen located on one side of No.1 Court. The sight was unbelievable! People were wild with excitement and

pride because a British player had reached the final of the prestigious tournament after 74 years! (The last Brit who had reached the final was Bunny Austin and the last Brit who had won the Championships was Fred Perry.) They all were also seeing something like this for the first time ever in their lives! It was a predominantly British atmosphere! People were sporting blue, white and red colors with their face painting, banners, and flags. Actually, people in United Kingdom love Federer but on that day, they were all there to support their local boy!

The final of the Gentlemen's Singles was supposed to take place at two that afternoon. There was still a lot of time left, so I decided to roam around.

## Outside the Centre Court





### At Henman Hill

I went to the main Wimbledon Shop. As I entered the shop, I realized that it was a bit too crowded! They were selling souvenirs and gift articles. The Championship towel, the Championship t-shirt, the Championship key-chains, wristbands, a mug, and a lanyard; I started picking up stuff and I did not stop for a while. I realized how much I spent once I reached the billing counter!

I went to one of the restaurants under Court No. 1 and picked up a bowl of fresh strawberries and cream. Eating strawberry and cream is a part of Wimbledon tradition. I had decided to do everything you are supposed to do when you are at Wimbledon. I was doing just that!

After a while, I came back on the Hill and picked a spot to sit for the match.

The match started on time.

Federer won the toss and decided to serve first. And guess what?! Murray broke

In the beginning of third set, both the players kept their first service, but the play was immediately suspended due to darkness and rain.

All of a sudden, people on the mound started moving off the Hill! Meanwhile, I went to the Wimbledon Museum. I loved the tour! I was looking at everything in there in awe, like a 10-year-old geeky kid visiting a science museum for the first time in his life. The museum consisted of a range of cups, plates, medals, players' costumes, kits, jewelry, memorabilia, paintings and so the list continues. It also had medals, programs, clothing and archived materials associated with the history of tennis within the Olympic movement. Being a tennis fan, a sports enthusiast in general, and with the tennis of London 2012 Olympic Games taking place at Wimbledon within the next three weeks, I was very fascinated for the current and upcoming sports events. I saw

Federer's serve in the first game. I was not worried though. Murray took the first set (6-4) in style and all Scots and Brits on the Hill cheered aloud! Now, I was concerned. Federer fans were there too; many of those were sporting the red Swiss flag on their tees simply kept quiet.

I was very restless till the last point of second set, which Roger took with a drop shot, winning 7-5.

### Roger's and Rafa's Gold Medals at the Museum



Nadal and Federer's Gold medals from the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. To see John McEnroe's ghost through a projection of him was fun! In the end of the museum tour, I saw both Gentlemen's and Ladies' Champion trophies.

The men's trophy bears the inscription: 'All England Lawn Tennis Club Single Handed Championship of the World.' It was so great to see Roger's name on it, from 2003-2007 and 2009. At that moment, I was not sure if I was going to

see the Old King lifting that trophy again in a few hours. The Ladies' round trophy is called as the Venus Rosewater Dish. Serena Williams honorably held the trophy in her hands the day before the men's singles final.

Later, I came back on the Hill.

I met two of my friends from the summer school there. They were both Federer fans too. Between Murray fans, Federer fans, and the tennis fans in general, nobody knew what was going to happen when the game resumes. The atmosphere on the Hill and the Centre Court was all stormy!

Around five o' clock, the match resumed on Centre Court. In about half an hour, Federer served to take the third set, 6-3. Federer was unbelievable in that set! After the rain interruption, Murray had been a little out of his game. On the other hand, Federer returned determined to win and reduced the number of unforced errors. Federer was looking better than Murray, both mentally and physically.



Fred Perry- Still the last Brit to win the Championship

In the fourth set, Federer was playing his natural game, moving all over the court, hitting forehand, backhand, volley and keeping service. It seemed like everything was going well for Federer. Andy was not playing bad tennis, but he was unable to do what he did in the first set. It was 6 pm with Roger now leading 5-3.

One more game to win and change the history books forever. Murray was serving to stay in the match. He held his serve successfully and the

score went to Federer still leading 5-4. Now, Federer was serving for the match! I don't know what happened in the next minute. The scoreboard told me that Federer now has two match points! Federer nets the ball and Murray saves one match point. I took my camera out of my pockets and got ready to capture a historic picture through my own lens. The next moment, Federer served and Murray's return landed wide! That's all. Game! Set! Match! Click!

### The return of the King!

Roger Federer, now 30 years old, won his 7th Wimbledon title, 17th Grand Slam overall and is back to being World No. 1 once again. I, 19, stand on Aorangi Terrace of Wimbledon and cheer aloud, screaming towards the sky, celebrating the victory of the person I love, adore and worship!

The victory ceremony was very emotional, for both Murray and Federer. Murray broke down in front of the local crowd. I looked around me. Every person I looked at tears in his or her eyes. Andy Murray had now become a national hero, not just to people in Scotland but everyone in United Kingdom was proud of him. I felt bad for Murray too. He played great throughout the tournament and lived up to the expectations of people.

Federer consoled Murray as Federer knew exactly what Murray was going through in that moment.

Then the moment came! The moment we all had been waiting for. Roger Federer received the trophy from Duke of Kent. He kissed the trophy and lifted it up! The crowd cheered in joy! I was so happy! So delighted!

Once the ceremony was over, people started moving. I was happy and calm, but overwhelmed! Suddenly I felt like jumping and I jumped twice-thrice on the spot! My friends and I started walking through St. Mary's Walk passing Centre Court. We reached the area where Press Centre, Competitors' Complex



Centre Court Entrance

### Roger Federer on the screen at Wimbledon, celebrating his win



and Members' Enclosure is. A small bridge there connects to the area from Centre Court directly. Many people gathered there but I did not know why. Someone told me that Federer was coming there to greet all his fans after he was done with the press. All I was thinking was, "Are you serious?!" We waited there for a while.

came Paul Annacone and Severin Luthi- Roger's camp! They were obviously the happiest among everyone.

And then, He came!

Federer, with a big smile on his face, came on the bridge, waved his hands, blew some flying kisses towards the crowd, and said, "Thank you all!"

Roger Federer is the greatest player of All-Time. Wimbledon is the greatest tournament in the World. So being at Wimbledon to see Roger, and capturing this moment with him through my camera lens, was surely the greatest moment of my life!



Roger Federer through my camera lens, greeting fans

After a few minutes, I saw Murray's legendary coach, Ivan Lendl, come out. Everyone welcomed him with a good cheer. It was an honor to see him. Then, Lindsay Davenport and Martina Hingis crossed the bridge! They were both teary eyed; I figured that must be because of Murray's speech. Age 31 and Martina Hingis still looked great! Then

I could not believe what was happening! Federer, the Roger Federer, was in front of me, looking at me.

I screamed with joy and took two pictures of him with my camera.

I had never been this happy in my life.

I do not have the words to describe those feelings!

He was only there for a minute or two, but that was enough for me.

Before leaving the site, I told myself, "Abhijeet, you can die peacefully now!" :-)