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Finally, Wimbledon glory for Murray

By ASSOCIATED PRESS
in Wimbledon, England

Andy Murray stood with the Union Jack draped over his shoulders, an Olympic gold medal around his neck, flanked by the man he had just beaten, Roger Federer, and basking in the roar of the Centre Court crowd.

No wonder the often dour Scotsman was grinning.

Murray won one for the home team on Sunday, beating Federer 6-2, 6-1, 6-4 in the tennis final at Wimbledon.

The victory marked a career breakthrough for Murray. He has lost all four of his Grand Slam finals, three against Federer, including Wimbledon a month ago.

"I've had a lot of tough losses in my career," he said. "This is the best way to come back from the Wimbledon final. I'll never forget it."

For Federer, the drubbing marked another Olympic disappointment. Playing in the Games for the fourth time, he sought a victory to complete a career Golden Slam but settled for silver — his first singles medal.

"Don't feel too bad for me," Federer said. "I felt like I won my silver, I didn't lose it. So I feel really happy."

Murray swept nine consecutive games to take control, breaking Federer's serve four times in a row, his inspired play a reflection of raucous crowd support. He erased all nine break points he faced.

"He never looked back," Federer said. "His credit for getting in the lead and using the crowd to come through. He did an unbelievable job."

The match capped the most memorable Olympics for tennis since it returned to the Games in 1988 after a 64-year absence. The event transformed staid Wimbledon into a more festive place.

Murray became the first British man to win the gold in singles since Josiah Ritchie in 1908. Those Games took place at Wimbledon, too.

In the day's first match on Centre Court, women's singles champion Serena Williams teamed with sister Venus to win their third career doubles gold medal. They defeated Andrea Hlavackova and Lucie Hradecka of the Czech Republic 6-4, 6-4 under the retractable roof.

Murray settled for a silver in mixed doubles with teammate Laura Robson. They lost to Victoria Azarenka and Max Mirnyi of Belarus, 2-6, 6-3, 1-0 (8).

Juan Martin del Potro of Argentina won the bronze in men's singles, beating Novak Djokovic of Serbia 7-5, 6-4. Maria Kirilenko and Nadia Petrova of Russia won the bronze in women's doubles.

The roof opened shortly before the men's final, and the beloved Federer — winner of seven Wimbledon titles — walked onto the sun-splashed grass to a standing ovation. Then Murray entered, and the ovation became a roar.

At the far end of the All-England Club, thousands of fans with grounds passes enjoyed a carnival atmosphere on the picnic hill known as Murray Mound while watching the match on a huge video screen.

Federer wore red and Murray blue in the most colorful tournament ever held at Wimbledon. Their tactics were also in sharp contrast.

Murray returned aggressively to repeatedly put Federer on the defensive when serving. Federer tried to come forward more than in any match this summer, but Murray answered with a succession of crisp passing shots for winners.



LIGHTNING STRIKES AGAIN

PHOTO BY ERIC FEFERBERG / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Jamaica's Usain Bolt celebrates after winning the gold medal in the men's 100m final at the athletics event during the London Olympics on Sunday. Bolt repeated as the fastest man on Earth.

'Super Dan' defends title

Chinese badminton ace earns second singles gold medal

By SUN XIAOCHEN in London
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It's hard to be great if you've never beaten anybody great.

Lucky for Chinese badminton ace Lin Dan, he's got Malaysia's Lee Chong Wei.

In the latest major showdown of the greatest rivalry in the sport's history, Lin outperformed Lee, 15-21, 21-10, 21-19, at Wembley Arena on Sunday to become the first man to defend an Olympic singles gold medal.

The nerve-racking final was the climax of a tournament in which China achieved its first sweep of the five gold medals on offer. It followed men's pair Cai Yun and Fu Haifeng's straight-sets victory over Danish duo Mathias Boe and Carsten Mogensen in the doubles final.

The clash might have been the final chapter of the great-four era,

which also featured 2004 Olympic champion Taufik Hidayat and Dane veteran Peter Gade.

Still, both insisted they might stick around.

"I don't know yet, but I won't make a quick decision," said Lin, 28. "If I continue, I have to set an exact goal to follow and find a proper approach. Otherwise, it will be a burden for me (to play as many tournaments as I did)."

Lee, the current world No 2 who also lost to Lin in the Beijing Games final, already has his eyes on the next target.

"You will still have me around in the next two years because I intend to fight for the 2014 Asian Games title and the Commonwealth Games crown," the 29-year-old said.

After a series of battles fought over more than eight years since their first major meeting at the 2004 Thomas Cup (the men's team world championship), Lin and Lee have become tough rivals

and close friends, and expect that relationship to continue.

"I feel so honored and lucky to have had him facing me on the other side of the court for so many years," Lin said. "To have an equal-level opponent is definitely important for me (to keep motivated). I cherish every match we had and look forward to having more."

Lee, who lags 23-9 in their face-to-face meetings, echoed Li's sentiment.

"Lin is a fantastic player and there will be only one Lin in the world," he said. "We also have other players like Taufik, Gade and Chen Long. Most of us have a very tough rivalry, and it's not a problem for me to play against those guys. It's always hard to handle Lin, because he's the best."

"But we have had a very good friendship off the court for many years. At the end of this month, when I go to China for a tournament, we will have a chance to further enhance our relationship."



REN ZHENGLAI / XINHUA

Lin Dan acknowledges the crowd's applause after beating longtime rival Lee Chong Wei of Malaysia to win the badminton gold medal in London on Sunday.

Foreign coaching legion plays role in winning campaign

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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They could be dubbed the sporting foreign legion and, appropriately, French coach Daniel Levasseur is one of them.

He helped the women's epee team win an Olympic gold medal on Saturday and is one of more than 20 foreign coaches hired to help Chinese athletes

hunt for gold, silver and bronze.

The strategy has been pretty successful, so far.

China, along with the US, heads the medal table, and foreign coaches have helped Chinese athletes conquer the world in sports normally associated with the West.

But winning formulas do not happen overnight. It takes years of blood, sweat and tears and trust must be established.

Juan Jane Giralt, the Spanish coach

of the women's water polo team, said trust was the first step to success.

"There may be too much emphasis on gold medals and too much hard, hard work," Giralt, told China Daily on Friday. Sometimes it feels as if you are expected to win gold, and nothing else will do, he said.

Dubbed the "water polo godfather", the Spaniard carried great expectations to London after driving the little-fancied squad to a historic silver medal at

the World Championships in Shanghai last year.

However, three straight losses in the pool stage dampened expectations.

Players were disappointed but remained firmly supportive of their outspoken mentor.

"Yeah, he really blamed us for some mistakes we made, not for the poor results but for the way we played," Ma Huan-huan, the team's top scorer, said. "But he still motivated and

praised us and made us believe in ourselves."

Giralt has been a controversial figure since joining the team in 2007 for the Beijing Olympics. He is known for his passionate coaching and tough training regime.

The energetic Spaniard does not pull punches and will target any player that he thinks is not giving their utmost.

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