



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

The French Open

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The French Open, 2010 Report One

May 21, 2010

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Shortly, I will be reporting from the Roland Garros tennis center in Paris, France about the 2010 French Open. It is one of the four major tournaments of the season, and the most prestigious match played on clay. Most of the coverage will focus on the final four days of the event (June 3-6), to which Reporterette and I have tickets.

Last year, I filed reports from New York on the 2009 U.S. Open, won by Juan Martin Del Potro. I intend to use the same approach for the French Open, one that tennis players and fans informed me they liked. But it was not to the taste of others. So, just a warning, the report will assume the reader knows at least a little, and likes a lot about the game.

During this time in France, two other reports will be file: one on Paris and another on a boat trip (a “barge” cruise) into parts of the French wine country. But for now, it’s about the French Open.

Anticipation for the Tournament

Much of the attention for this year’s contest is focused on Rafael Nadal, the gifted player from Spain. He is only 23 years of age, yet he has already won six major titles. For a while, before he was injured, he attained the number one ranking in the world. He has also won the French Open four times. Until his injuries took their toll, he owned this tournament. Currently, he is the King of Clay.

Before his injuries, Nadal was considered to be the successor to Roger Federer in ranking “number one” for an extended period. He dismantled Federer in the U.S. Open two years ago.

It appears Rafael (nicknamed Rafa) has recovered from his injuries. Last week, he defeated Roger in Madrid (6-4, 7-6 (7-5)). If Rafa stays healthy, I predict Roger will lose his French Open crown to Rafa---which many think (including this writer), he won last year because Rafa’s knees gave out.

Speaking of injuries, one disappointment is the likely absence from this tournament of Del Potro. He defeated Federer in last year’s Open. I was hoping to see him again, but he is still recovering from an operation on his wrist. He may also miss defending his U.S. Open title.

Tennis, Wimpy Sport?

Injuries to professional tennis players occur often. They are as common as injuries to professional basketball players. This idea is seemingly strange, as both are considered to be non-contact sports. As well, consider that an injury to an NFL player is routine, just part of the game. But frequent player injuries in the game of effete, sissy tennis? How can that be?

Just watch a match between gifted tennis players. It is not effete. It is not sissy. It is a contest of strength, speed, stamina, power, finesse, and mental resilience. The game, often played on a

court with a temperature that can reach over 100 degrees F, can last over four hours. It's one-on-one. No team mates to spur you on. No coaches to edge you forward.

The game at this level entails hitting the ball with as much force and spin as possible. It entails hours of stop-and-go, sudden sprints, and abrupt stops. All are executed with extreme mental and physical exertions. All must come together to win a point or to save one. It is an elegant yet ferocious ballet that tests the physical and psychological strengths of the opponents.

It's also a game that is rewarded by those who can repeat...and repeat....and repeat with never ending consistency the same set of hits off the racket from many different positions and angles on the court. Consequently, it requires enormous acceleration and agility to get to the ball in order to hit it from a long practiced position and with an effective, well known stroke. A stroke that can only be attained through hundreds of thousands of similarly enacted strokes. Competence in this game is based on muscle memory, attained through repetition.

Repetition leads to the success of a gifted tennis player (or most any successful athlete), but it also often leads to the injury (and perhaps retirement) of that same player. Repetition of this order and of this intensity---hitting a ball that is coming into the racket with tremendous speed and forceful top spin takes a toll on the body. An injury can occur to a hip, a knee, an arm, even a foot. They often cripple a tennis player, especially a player who plays frequently.

That is what professional tennis players do. They practice or play in an intense mode more than most athletes. It's the way they make their living.

I can appreciate their problem. Even at my very low skill level, I've been injured for fourteen months. My repetitions against better players, day-after-day, week-after-week led to an injured right arm. I made the mistake of trying to come back too soon to play and twice reinjured the tendons and muscles around my elbow.

I am similar to Rafa in thinking (and woefully dissimilar in physical performance) that an injury can make the player tentative. For me it takes a lot of fun out of the activity. Today, I am happy to report that I hit the ball for over an hour with a much better player and I am typing this report with no pain. Life is good, especially when it is pain free. But I'm taking it easy for a while. I've learned my lesson.

For this report, we will see how these fantastic athletes hold up. We will reflect on their mental resolve, their tenacity, and their phenomenal physical abilities.

In the meantime, in a few days, I'll send you reports on Paris, as we will explore the city before we attend the French Open. After the Open, we will take a six day barge cruise and eat a lot of French cheese...and drink just the right amount of French wine; that is, a lot!

The French Open, 2010 Report Two

June 3, 2010

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. We have left the museums and monuments of Paris for the Roland Garros stadium and the French Open tennis tournament. As mentioned in Report One, Reporterette and I are watching the final four days of the matches.

Roland Garros

Today, I paid my first call on Roland Garros, the only venue I had not visited of the Four Majors. They are U.S. Open, Wimbledon, Australian Open, and French Open. Roland Garros is my favorite stadium of the four. It is small. There are no lights for night play, nor electronic beams to clarify line calls. The main court seating is not much bigger than a college arena. It is beautifully understated but subject to speculation about being bulldozed or otherwise ignored in order to build an arena that will require oxygen masks for spectators occupying the top row of seats.

Figure 1 shows some photos I took today of the facility. It is named after Roland Garros, a pilot who donated the land to the French Tennis Federation on the conditions it be used for tennis, maintained by the Federation, and be named after Mr. Garros. Not a bad idea. I'm thinking of donating my back yard to my neighbor. He can name it anything he wants just as long as the mows the grass.

Most of the Suzanne Lenglen stadium was open seating. I also like sitting where I can watch play from the end of the court, as seen in the middle figure. Also, both of these arenas have two large screens (right photo in Figure 1) that show replays, scores, and statistics.



**Figure 1.
Scenes
from
Roland
Garros.**

Two arenas are used for most of the major matches. The area depicted in the left photo of Figure 1 is the Philippe-Chatrier stadium. It is the largest at Roland Garros, although it is modest in scale when compared to the U.S. Open site in New York and the stadium at Indian Wells, California. The stadium in the middle photo is the Suzanne Lenglen stadium. For all four days, we were seated around 14 to 18 rows up from the Philippe-Chatrier court, straight-on to the service line: super seats. At the Suzanne Lenglen site, our tour operator (Steve Furgal's International Tennis Tours, Inc.) had a box seat reserved for his customers a few rows up from the court. Again, it was also inside the service line and a fine place to view the action.

Over the Hill and Still Slugging it Out

Some of the most enjoyable matches were in the categories of “Legends over 45” and “Legends under 45.” I can relate to these players’ relatively slow movements (although much faster than mine), and I have followed the careers of these players for many years. I watched Mats Wilander, Michael Chang, Michael Stich, Pat Cash, Mary Jo Fernandez, Martina Navratilova and many others.



Figure 2. More horse play.

Many of these contests were played light-heartedly. The players wanted to win, but the games were round robins, something akin to semi-exhibitions. The winners took away \$10,000, likely pocket change for many of them who have made fortunes on their tennis skills. Nonetheless, there was a lot of joking and horse play during the matches, much to the delight of the crowd.

An example of the jovial atmosphere of these matches is shown in Figure 2. One of the player’s son came onto the court during the award

ceremonies. He picked up his father’s racquet and started playing a game against himself while the trophies were being presented. No one cared. Almost everyone laughed, including the officials and the dad. Shortly after this scene, father and son sort of hit a few balls to each other, again to the delight of the crowd. A cool scene. A cool dad.

Women’s Single Semi-finals¹

The focus of today’s matches is the women’s single semi-finals: Francesca Schiavone (Italy, seeded 17) vs. Elena Dementieva (Russia, seeded 5), and Samantha Stosur (Australia, seeded 7) vs. Jelena Jankovic (Serbia, seeded 4). It is an interesting foursome: None has won a major title.

Predictions: For the first match, my bet is on Dementieva. She is highly ranked (5) in contrast to Schiavone (17). She is more powerful and bigger than her opponent. Neither have particularly good French Open records, but Dementieva has a better record this year, and has at least made it to the French Open quarterfinals in the past.



Figure 3. Sam serving.

For the second match, I think Stosur will beat Jankovic. Having just recently watched Stosur, I’m impressed with her power. Take a look at Figure 3. Those arms and shoulders help produce a lot of force on the ball, as well as an amazing high kick on her serve. If we did not know “Sam”---as she is called---was a “Samantha,” her upper body build could lead us to think she is a line backer. By the way, don’t get me wrong on this subject. I greatly admire anyone (man or

woman) who puts in the time and effort to build their bodies.

Nonetheless, Jankovic is a great competitor---and a brilliant defensive player, one who can turn a point around with her ball placements. Still, I’m going with Stosur. She’s on a roll. Thus far, she

¹ For the predictions, I resort to the present tense. For the outcomes, both present and past tenses are used.

has taken out formerly number one ranked Justine Henin, and currently ranked number one Serena Williams. As of today, she's 20-2 on clay this year.

Results: Schiavone beat Dementieva on a match default. Elena retired because of a leg injury (torn calf muscle). Nonetheless, I am very impressed with the tenacity of Schiavone. She is a scrapper. Scrappiness alone will not take a player to a major title. Still, Schiavone has impressed me with her doggedness. As well, to recover from a well hit shot to her, she has a great ability to take away some of her forehand "windup" and change the stroke into an almost racquetball like "flick." It produces a lot of top spin and likely discourages the opponent who had been thinking she had control of the point. She may still have control, but not as much. (I'm going to work on that stroke.)

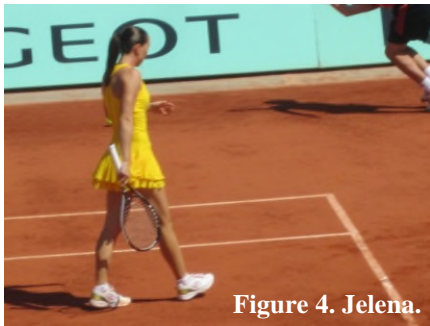


Figure 4. Jelena.

Stosur beat Jankovic (6-1, 6-2). The match appeared to be closer than the score indicated. But it was really not much of a contest. Stosur won 59 points; Jankovic only 38. Stosur won 81% of the points on her first serve; Jankovic only 38%. Jena had a lot of trouble handling Sam's kick serve. She got most of them back, but often they were desperate strikes at the ball.

The one consolation for Jankovic, at least from the females in the crowd near me, was that her tennis gear beat the digs of Stosur. Figure 4 shows Jelena's yellow ensemble. Contrast it with the outfit in Figure 3. Sam won the match, but Jelena won the fashion show. I vote for Jelena's dress, but then, I'm old-fashioned.

Wheel Chair Matches



Figure 5. Handicapped in name only.

I spent time today watching tennis contests between players who were confined to wheelchairs. Don't let us ever handicap the handicapped. The resolve shown to excel against life's fickle fates; the spirit displayed to even get off the couch, not to mention the never ending hassles and inconveniences of living in a non-handicapped world is a model to us all. I sat in a seat next to the court shown in figure 5 watching two men duke-it-out from their wheel chairs. My paltry afflictions pale in comparison to theirs. If I were so-contained, I am not certain I would have the resolve to move beyond my containment.

I asked Steve Furgal, our tour group operator, if the rules for wheel chair tennis were any different than regular tennis. He said yes, the game permits two bounces of the ball onto the court, instead of one for conventional tennis. This idea is ideal for aging wannabe French Open daydreamers. I'm going to ask my younger and more talented opponents to adapt to the wheel chair tennis rules...but on my side of the court.

That's it for now. I would like to report more, but these columns are set up to be relatively short. Tomorrow, we return to the French Open for the men's single semifinals and the women's double finals.

The French Open, 2010 Report Three

June 4, 2010

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Today, I watched three matches: Two men's singles semifinals and the women's doubles finals. This report covers these contests and introduces a vacation tour operator.

Steve Furgal's International Tennis Tours, Inc.¹

During these days at Roland Garros, Reporterette and I are participating in a tour under the aegis of Steve Furgal's International Tennis Tours, Inc. One of the advantages of using a tour operator is a hassle free experience. The tour guide takes care of everything. For this tournament, it included tickets to the matches, access to a private suite located under the bleachers and few seconds to our seats, transportation to and from the stadium, hotel reservations, and an assortment of memorabilia.

Obviously, the tour company must take a cut of the fee the customer pays for these services, but if the company is competent, the fee is well spent. In the case with Steve Furgal, our fee was very well spent. His services do not come cheap, but the old saying, "You get what you pay for." is a fitting description of Steve's product. I will have more to say about his work in a separate report, coming to you later (a barge tour through a wine region southeast of Paris). For now, suffice it to say that Steve and his wife Anne run a fine operation. (I received no discounts from Steve and Anne for this promotional. See footnotes.)

One aspect of their operation is the availability of a cooled private suite for their customers. It is located just underneath our reserved seats in the bleachers. It provides an open bar and food on demand throughout the day, a gourmet lunch with choice wines, a TV monitor of the matches, a toilet, and an air conditioned escape from a hot arena.



One example of the memorabilia, all of which are practical items (no pennants, etc.), is seen in Figure 6. Earlier in the week, I had my Panama hat stolen (see the "Paris, France" report for the Panama hat saga). I intended to buy a large brimmed hat at Roland Garros, but none were available at the vendor shops. Steve's offerings of stuff for his customers included the white straw hat shown in Figure 6. Its brim is not as wide as my Panama hat, but any port in a storm, any hat in the sun. As the week progressed, I grew fond of this hat.

¹ I did not inform Steve Anne of my intention to write about their company until the tournament had ended (and we were on the second day of a barge tour). I have received no compensation from his company for this critique. As my readers know, I accept no fees from anyone but my book readers and publishers.

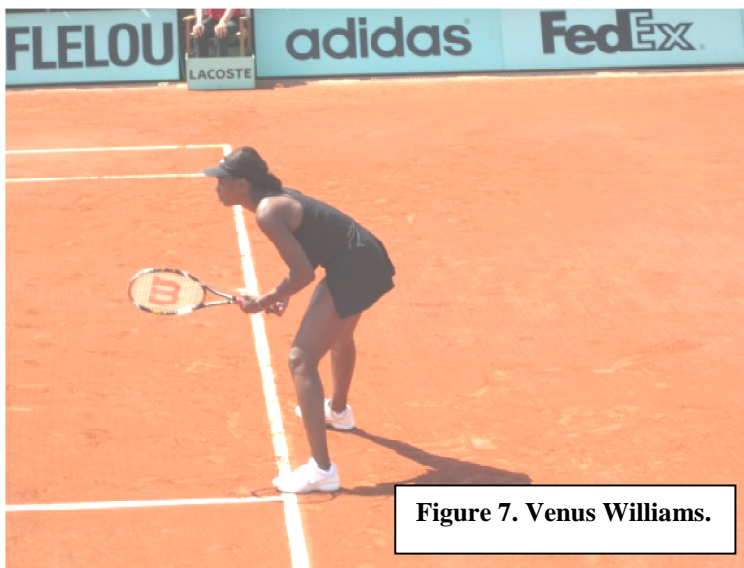
Women's Doubles Finals

I watched Venus and Serena Williams dismantle their doubles opponents at the U.S. Open last year. Their skills made the other contestants' performances seem like club players. Today, their dominance was once again in evidence. Ranked number one in the seedings, they defeated Kveta Peschke and Katarina Srebotnik (seeded 17th) 6-2, 6-3. The score was lopsided, but Peschke and Srebotnik often gave tit-for-tat.

The Peschke/Srebotnik break point conversions percentage was 67% to the Williams' 63%. Seemingly, a telling statistic. However, the Williams sisters converted 5 of 8 break opportunities to their opponents' 2 of 3. It is not the percentage of break points won. It is the number. Indeed, usually the number of opportunities is a telling indicator of the vulnerability of the server(s).

Still, the failure to convert a break point into a game winner is discouraging. Conversely, the turning around of a break point to the holding of the serve can be a confidence builder. The Williams sisters scored 62 points; Peschke/Srebotnik scored 43. No contest really.

Earlier in these reports, I commented on the powerful, beautiful physique of Samantha Stosur. If you have a chance, tune in to a TV program showing the Williams sisters. You will behold two fine examples of Mother Nature's special work on us humans. Serena is heavily muscled. At first glance, she appears to carry a cumbersome body. No. She's just that: heavily muscled, but not cumbersome at all, *and* fast. She reminds me of a black female Bobby Morrow, a former 100 yard dash Olympics Gold Medal winner. She possesses sheer power and speed.



And then there is Venus; just the opposite in physical make up. (See Figure 7). She is slender, maybe a bit skinny. But take a look at her thighs. They are long and in proportion to their lengths, thick as well. Those thighs are the stuff of dreams of legitimate body builders. Long and well proportioned, built for agility, leaping, power, and speed.

I recognize I am dwelling on the bodies of only females in these reports. That's my preference. You want descriptions of Nadal's biceps?

Write your own report.

Men's Singles Semifinals

Predictions: The first men's singles semifinal match is between Robin Soderling (Sweden, seeded 5) and Thomas Berdych (Czechoslovakia, seeded 15). The second match is between Rafael Nadal (Spain, seeded 2) and Jurgen Melzer (Austria, seeded 22). I see little chance of

upsets in either contest. Soderling and Nadal are playing very well. I would be surprised if either match is close.

Results of the Soderling-Berdych Match: I saw sets 1, 2, and 5 of the Soderling-Berdych match. The viewing lapse was because the women's doubles final was also underway in the Suzanne Lenglen arena, and I went over to watch Venus and Serena take apart their opponents.

The first men's contest was a good match, and won by Soderling (6-3, 6-3, 3-6, 5-7, 6-3). I was surprised by the performance of Berdych. The man played better than a 15th ranked seed. He had 3 more aces than Soderling (21 to 18), 3 fewer double faults (8 to 5), 22 fewer unforced errors (!) (41 to 63), and their winning point percentage on first serve was almost identical.

What was the difference? Soldering (logically) won more points (155 to 140). He also had more winners ((including service winners)) 62 to 42). Soderling broke Berdych in 6 of 13 opportunities; Berdych broke Soderling in 4 of 12 chances.

But another telling statistic is "receiving points won." It means how many points the player wins when he is not serving. The statistic tells a lot about a player's ability to take the server's (usual) advantage (the serve) and at least negate it to some extent. In tennis, the slight negation of an assumed advantage often makes the difference between victory and defeat. For this match, Berdych served 5 more times than did Soderling (150 to 145), which *might* be seen as giving him an advantage. But Sodlerling's receving points won was 59 of 150 (39%) to Berdych's 49 of 145 (34%).

Regarding the receiving points won statistic, I am coming around to the notion that one of the most important weapons---maybe the most important--- a player can have in his arsenal is the ability to return a serve with depth and force---a point made in last year's U.S. Open report. Hmm, not his serve but his return of serve? Let's look at the upcoming matches and do come comparisons. In the meantime:

Results of the Nadal-Melzer Match: As predicted, Nadal prevailed, 6-2, 6-3, 7-6 (8-6).² Melzer gave it a go, especially in the third set, but he was outmatched. Figure 8 shows one reason for the



Figure 8. Trying to cope.

Nadal victory. His opponent was often forced to hit shots without a good setup because Nadal had placed the ball at an acute angle, and with a lot of speed and topspin. If you have a chance, look for an opportunity to watch Rafa's forehand. It is very unconventional, but he has the strength and timing to put tremendous spin and velocity on the ball. Watching on TV is impressive. A live look is almost scary, especially if you or I would be at the receiving end.

² As mentioned in Report One, these essays are written with the assumption you know a little bit about tennis. For the interested newcomer, the 7-6 score in this third set means the players tied at 6-6 and played a tie breaker. The tie breaker is set up so the first player to score 7 points (with a margin of at least 2 points) wins the set. Nadal won this set by winning the tie breaker 8-6.

One reason Nadal has become the best tennis player in the world (my view) is because he has improved his serve. He still needs to achieve more speed on his first serve. For example, in this match, the average speed of his first serve was 113.4 mph, in contrast to Soldering's 123 mph in the other semi-final game. Still, Melzer won only 29% of the points that Nadal served. It was a very lop-sided match. Nadal won 108 points to Melzer's 76.

The statistic I just mentioned, receiving points won: Melzer won 25 of 85 of his returns of service (29%). Whereas Nadal won 48 of 99 of his returns (48%). That is a huge difference. Again, in this match, the player who served more balls (99 to 85), with the *supposed* associated advantage, did not win the match.

What gives here? It's an easy answer. It deals with the notion that the most serves in a match means a player is being taken to longer games, which means more serves: 40-40; ad; deuce; ad; deuce; ad, game, and so on. More serves do not translate into a better advantage. It means the returner is forcing the server to serve more.

I thought Melzer had Nadal on the ropes in the first set. At one point, he had him at 15-40, but Melzer failed to convert, and then he lost the game. On another occasion, he had Nadal at love-30, and failed to win the next two points. After watching these two failed opportunities, I said to myself, *Melzer is toast to Nadal's toaster*.

Granted, Melzer won 67% of his chances to break Nadal (2 of 3), and Nadal won 63 % of his chances (5 of 8). But that is the point. Once again, it is not the percentages that *may* happen, it is the number of breaks that *actually* happen.

Still, the Austrian held in there. He gutted out the third set to force a tie breaker. He took himself to his limits. But so did Rafa. On this occasion, Rafa's limits were beyond those of Jurgen.

Afterthoughts

In Report One, I made some comments about the power, speed, strength, agility, and mental toughness it takes to be a gifted tennis player. I didn't take up the game until I was 35 years old, so it is not a natural game to me. Still, watching the players this week gives me a sense of awe and also one of hope.

Awe, in how phenomenally gifted they are. Hope, in how I can daydream that I might someday smack that one single, solitary forehand that is Nadal-like, even though it would take place purely through a statistical anomaly.

Still, the hitting of thousands of balls against the ball machine and with my playing partners increases the chances of my executing a Nadal-like forehand topspin. I'm still trying, but I'm still waiting.

The French Open, 2010 Report Four

June 5, 2010

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Today is the women's singles finals: Samantha Stosur (Australia, seeded 7) vs. Francesca Schiavone (Italy, seeded 17).

I am happy to report that in spite of my burdensome job of writing stories about the French Open, Steve and Anne are making my task much easier with their consummate handholding. I need not worry about much of anything except watching the best tennis players in the world match their skills at the best clay tournament in the world. Tough duty: I have to be on time to be driven to Roland Garros. I'm subjected to a supreme lunch, accentuated with French cheeses and wines. I have almost anything for the asking. The truth is, they're spoiling me. Try it, you'll like it. Anyway, back to Roland Garros.



Throughout the time I attended the French Open, the crowd was entertained occasionally with live music. Today, a quartet, shown in Figure 9, provided pleasant notes to passersby as they made their way around this fine facility. It is a nice touch to a beautifully rendered stadium and a skillfully managed tournament.

**Figure 9. Entertainment
beyond entertaining tennis.**

Prediction for Women's Singles Championship: I'm going with Stosur. First, I like her biceps. Second, I like her kick serve. Third, I like her footwork; she prepares well. Fourth, her clay court record this year is outstanding.

Schiavone? She has surprised me this week. As stated in an earlier report, she's a fighter. She's been a top 20 player for around ten years. She won't back down.

Nonetheless, only once in the history of the French Open (1933) has anyone "seeded outside the top 10 won the women's singles title."¹ Francesca not only has to contend with Sam's service slams, she has to contend with history.

Results: I like crow, just as long as it's cooked in a gorgonzola/wine sauce. Good thing, as I'm eating it, Schiavone upset Stosur (6-4, 7-6 (7-2)). How did she do it? Without the hindsight of the media pundits and the tennis experts, I think it was because of her almost flawless net play. She did not come to the net as often as Sam (18 approaches for Sam and 15 approaches for Francesca). But Francesca won 14 of those 15 approaches. Sam won only 11 of 18. Francesca was the more aggressive: She put her foot down, and Sam moved out of the way.

¹ John Branch, "A Smiling Schiavone makes History for Italy," *International Herald Tribune*, June 4, 2010, p. 16.

It was close. Francesca edged out Sam in (again, what I think is a critical performance statistic) receiving points won. Sam was 30%; Francesca was 34%. And for break point conversions? Sam had 1; Francesca had 2.

Many matches are very close. They may not appear so when watching them. But they are. A major championship, a person's fame, her fortune in life can be decided by a single point. It just depends on what part of a game or set that particular point is played out.

'Slammin' Sam,' as she is known, looked as if she might push the match to three sets after taking a 4-1 lead in the second set. But Schiavone, fought back to 4-4. I suspect her surge broke the Australian's spirit. In a post match interview, Stosur said, "I didn't really step up to the line and play the kind of game I needed to play, to keep that lead. Having that break boosted the confidence a little bit, but I didn't keep the foot down."²

Sam handled her speech at the award ceremonies well. (See Figure 10). Obviously, she was disappointed, but Francesca mentioned to her that she was still young and could win the French Open in later years.



Figure 10. Francesca Schiavone raises her trophy.

So Francesca Schiavone goes down in history as the first Italian woman to win a major tennis title. And the endorsement offers are rolling in.

Tomorrow is the last match of the tournament, the men's singles title.

² www.RolandGarros.com

The French Open, 2010 Report Five

June 6, 2010

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Today is the men's singles championship match between Rafael Nadal and Robin Soderling. As before, the spectators were entertained with live music. The offering this afternoon was a French military band, as seen in Figure 11.



Figure 11. More music.

Predictions: I favor Nadal in this contest. Unlike his defeat to Soderling last year, Rafa is rested and injury free. He lost his crown last year: He's hungry. Robin is dangerous, but he had a long match in the semis, and I don't think anyone on earth can beat a healthy, rested Nadal on clay.

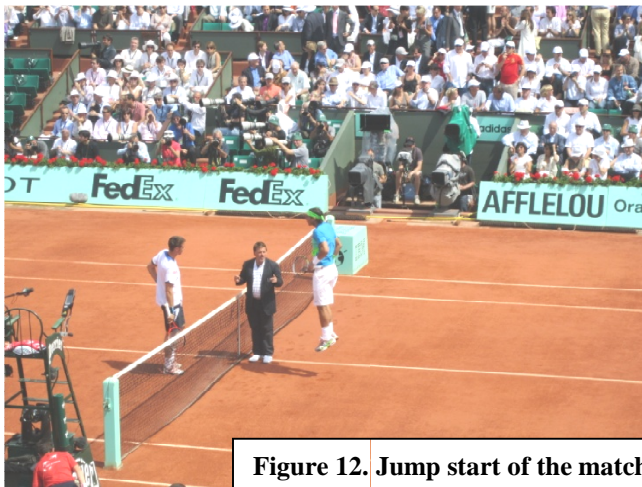


Figure 12. Jump start of the match.

To see just how healthy and motivated Nadal is, I snapped the photo in Figure 12 during the coin toss for who serves first. Rafa is jumping up and down, waiting for the action to begin. *I wanna serve! I wanna play! Let's get this thing going!*

I revert to past tense and let's see what happened:

Results: As expected, Nadal regained this French Open title. He won in three sets: 6-4, 6-2, 6-4. The match was not close. Here's why:

First serve in:	Soderling: 51 of 91 for 56%	Nadal: 69 of 90 for 77%
Total points won:	Soderling: 81	Nadal: 100
Receiving points won:	Soderling: 26 of 90 for 29%	Nadal: 36 of 91 for 40%
Break point conversions:	Soderling: 0 of 8 for 0%	Nadal: 4 of 12 for 33%

Soderling's semifinal match with Berdych may have taken some of the starch out of him. It lasted 3 hours, 27 minutes. For the final match, he only got 56% of his first serves in, not good enough for someone of Nadal's caliber, as evidenced by 40% of Nadal's receiving points won. Figure 13 shows Nadal receiving his trophy.



Figure 13. Awards presentations.

It's a Wrap

It's time to wrap up the reports on the 2010 French Open. As mentioned earlier, I watched these tennis players with a sense of awe. I know how difficult it is for them (and impossible for me) to play as wonderfully as they do. Michelangelo offered this idea, "If people knew how hard I have to work to gain my mastery, it wouldn't seem so wonderful."¹

Maybe, but try as I might, over countless hours of work, I could never do what the Nadals of the world do. Nor I suspect, could you. We just do not have it in us. That's why bleachers are installed in sports stadiums. That's why they build art galleries. To behold the genius of those who have gifts we do not possess.

Back to a subject in which I have a touch of genius: eating and drinking. Let's head for a part of France that is about 100 miles southeast of Paris. It's in the Burgundy region. We are boarding a

¹ Leonard Roy Frank, *Quotationary* (New York: Random House, 2001), p. 256.

barge of a six-day trip down a canal. Yes, I know, tough duty. But that's what we reporters must do.