

Dear All,

Roger Federer or FedEx as he was called retired from tennis last week. Federer played tennis for 24 years and was easily the most liked player of many generations. I played tennis in university and was captain in my final year. Tennis has always been a sport I enjoy watching. In sheer tennis talent, I can think of two people I would go to watch any day – Roger Federer and John McEnroe. I saw both play at different times live in Dubai and Wimbledon, and it was magical to see them glide across the court. Here are my set of learnings from Federer:

1. Federer was a prodigy of sorts. His father is Swiss German, and his mother is South African. He has two passports – Swiss and South African.
2. As a kid he was cranky, he lost his temper, he would scream, exactly the opposite of what we know of him today.
3. The Swiss tennis federation backed Federer when he started, and he always paid them back.
4. He was the junior Wimbledon singles and doubles champion in 1998.
5. He first came into the reckoning when he beat 7 times Wimbledon champion Pete Sampras on Centre court in a 5-set thriller in 2001. He was 19 and had the belief to beat a champion. He cried after beating Sampras knowing fully well that it was the end of an era for tennis. Federer was 15th seed that year and Sampras was No.1 seed. Federer lost the semifinals to Tim Henman that year.
6. There was no stopping Federer after that. He has played 1,526 singles matches and won 1,251 of them, a staggering 81.9 %-win ration, very slightly ahead of Jimmy Connors who won 1,274 matches out of 1,557, a 81.8 % win ration. Federer won 103 titles, 6 behind Connors who won 109 titles. He won 20 grand slams and won Wimbledon 8 times, the highest by any player. He also won the Davis Cup for Switzerland in 2014.
7. Vijay Amritraj said in an interview with WION channel. “It’s never about the numbers when you talk of Federer. The fans loved him for his grace, his style, and his easy rhythm. Federer was a ballerina on court, and no one can ever beat that. That’s why he was loved so much, since we love watching ballet on court” So, well said!
8. Federer was always graceful on-court or off-court whether he won or lost. His wins made him hinger for more and his losses didn’t make him bitter. That’s why he was liked because he played the game for the game and applauded his opponents when they won.
9. Federer’s biggest competitor was Nadal even though he has played more matches vs Djokovic. Both are thick friends and do clinics and foundation work together.
10. Federer started his foundation in 2003, the first year he won Wimbledon. This foundation looks after education for the underprivileged children.
11. He has won the Stefan Edberg trophy for sportsmanship 13 times and the Laureus world sportsman of the year award 5 times.
12. He married his Swiss teammate Miroslava when they represented Switzerland in the 2000 Sydney Olympics. He has two sets of twins – the first girls and the second set boys.

Federer last played Wimbledon on 7th July 2021. I watched the match on television. He lost the match to Hubert Hurkacz, in three straight sets. He lost the final set 6-0, the first time he ever lost a set at zero in Wimbledon. The world and he knew than that time was catching up. He had a few knee operations after that but could never be back to his full flow and decided to call it a day.

He is possibly the finest, most graceful tennis player I have seen over 30 years of watching tennis.

Feedback welcome
Shiv