

Fab five for Federer as he crushes Murray's dream

TENNIS

By Simon Lewis
US OPEN MEN'S FINAL

ANDY Murray admitted he was beaten by the better man after losing in straight sets to record-breaking Roger Federer in the US Open final at Flushing Meadows.

Murray, 21, had history in his sights after defeating world number one Rafael Nadal in the previous night's semi-final, aiming to become the first British male since Fred Perry at the US national championships in 1936 to win a Grand Slam.

It was not to be, though, as Federer, seeded second behind Nadal, completed his 34th consecutive victory at Flushing Meadows.

Murray said: "I had a great tournament but I came up against a great opponent today. I got the better of him the last two times we played and he definitely set the record straight today.

"I've got a lot of improving to do if I want to win one of these tournaments. I love playing in front of this crowd. I've played three matches on Arthur Ashe (court), and it's been the best time of my life."

Federer's fifth consecutive US Open title moved him to within one win of equalling Pete Sampras' record of 14 major titles and he insisted: "One thing's for sure — I'm not going to stop at 13.

"But there's a great bunch of guys behind and in front of me like Andy. He's done great in the last couple of weeks and I'm sure there's much more of Andy in the future as well."

Federer, who had lost his number one world ranking to Nadal and both his Australian Open and Wimbledon titles in 2008, ended the Grand Slam year on a high with a 6-2, 7-5, 6-2 victory in one hour and 51 minutes.

Federer proved to his critics he was far from being a spent force in the game.

Job done, and witnessed by a 23,763 capacity crowd at Arthur Ashe Stadium as Federer also gained revenge for a second consecutive defeat to Murray in Dubai in March.

The Swiss star had stormed to a four-set victory over third seed Djokovic in the semis on Saturday and had enjoyed a day's extra rest while Murray was battling Nadal on Sunday. He looked supremely confident, his forehand immaculate and his mobility excellent as he broke Murray to go 4-2 up in



the first set and then stepped up a further gear to take a 1-0 lead in just 27 minutes.

Murray had dug deep in the third round to come from two sets to love down to beat Austria's Jurgen Melzer but no player had lost the first set in a US Open final and gone on to win since Edberg in 1991.

Federer took his fifth straight game to open the second set and added a sixth to break Murray, only to see the British player break back to love with a great cross-court forehand return backed up with a powerful backhand that the Swiss could only volley into the net.

Murray held his serve comfortably to draw level at 2-2 and he won the next three points on Federer's serve to earn another triple break point off another loose volley at the net from the second seed. Federer saved the first by stretching Murray with a series of thundering forehands but Murray should have wrapped the game up in a similar rally on the next point

when a Federer forehand mid-point looked long but play continued to the defending champion's benefit.

Murray looked witheringly at the line judge but having not challenged in mid-point he could do nothing to reverse the situation and Federer went on to hold serve as a television replay showed the ball had indeed been long.

With Murray serving to send the set into a tiebreak at 6-5 down, Federer re-emerged from a mid-set lull to convert the first of three set points, punish a drop shot at the net with a winner down the line. Having matched Federer throughout the set, Murray found himself 2-0 down and with a mountain to climb as the 12-time grand slam winner celebrated with a huge roar.

Murray's exertions in the previous rounds, with epic performances against Michael Llodra, Melzer, Juan Martin Del Potro and Nadal, finally appeared to have caught up with him as Federer broke his serve in the second



game of the third set.

Not that the British number one had thrown in the towel, Murray grittily stretching to return a skidding drop shot and sending back a winner at an astonished Federer.

He still was no match for the defending champion, though, and soon surrendered a triple break

point that Federer hammered home with a backhand to take a 4-0 lead.

Murray finally got on the scoreboard at 4-1 to great cheers from the New York crowd and they got even louder as he broke back in the next game. Federer kept the pressure up with victory in sight and moved to 30-0 up on Murray's

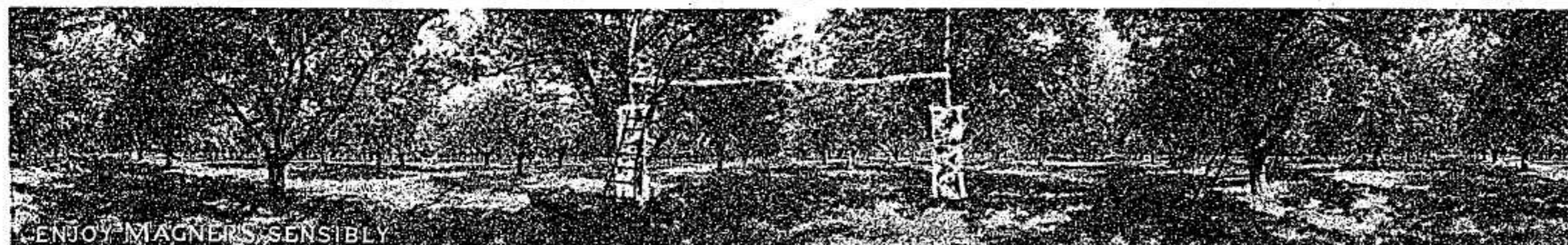
serve, two points from the championship.

Murray scratched his way back into the game but his first service had deserted him and at deuce he sent over a tired double fault.

On championship point for Federer, Murray sent over a great first serve at last and moved into the net to put away a volley but it was merely delaying the inevitable. Murray kept going but relented as Federer struck camp on the T and fired in overhands that his opponent finally failed to send back.

A fifth straight US Open title was Federer's and Sampras' grand slam record is now in touching distance.

ABOVE: A devastated Andy Murray looks on as the US Open trophy is out of his reach
LEFT: Roger Federer celebrates as he wins a fifth straight US Open title and ends Andy Murray's hopes of a first Grand Slam crown. GETTY IMAGES



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