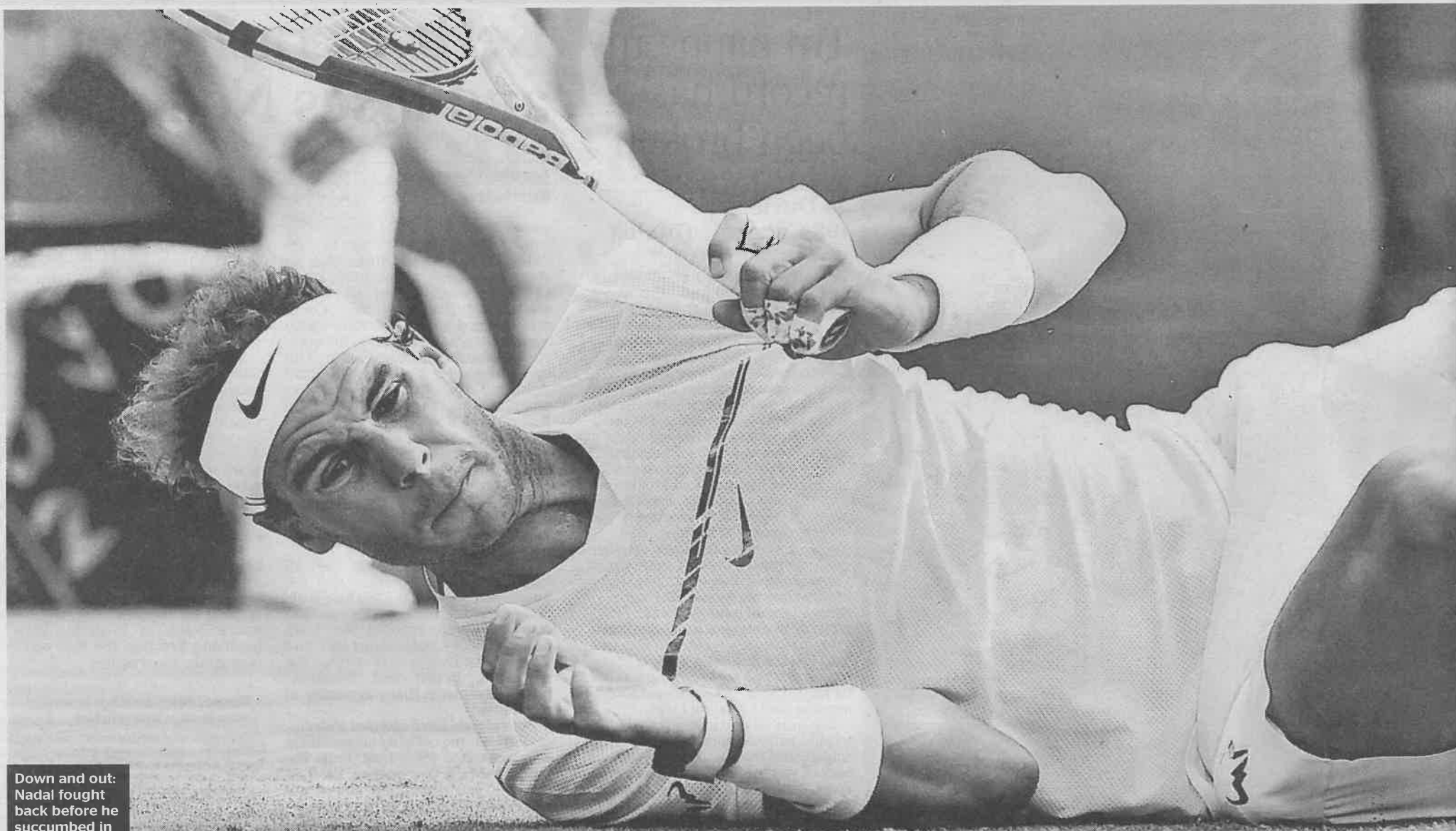


Sport Wimbledon 2017



Down and out: Nadal fought back before he succumbed in an epic fifth set

# New hero of Wimbledon ousts

Rick Broadbent

Rafael Nadal began this match by striking the top of his head on a beam as he limbered up in the corridor by No 1 Court. Four hours and 48 minutes later, after a contest of the highest drama, the revival hit its glass ceiling.

The two-times champion fell to Gilles Müller, Luxembourg's most famous sportsman who almost quit tennis because of an elbow injury in 2013. An epic five-set match which finished 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 15-13 only hints at the manifold stories within.

Müller, the No 16 seed whose ranking fell as low as 374, had Nadal, the No 4 seed, in trouble for two sets, before the Spaniard retaliated spectacularly.

He squared the match and looked to have turned the tide. Cue the greatest toilet break in Müller's career. He returned for the finale and consistently pegged Nadal back in a set that lasted 135 minutes. Nadal saved four match points; Müller saved four break points



Luxembourg No 16 seed Müller celebrates after his 15-13 fifth-set win

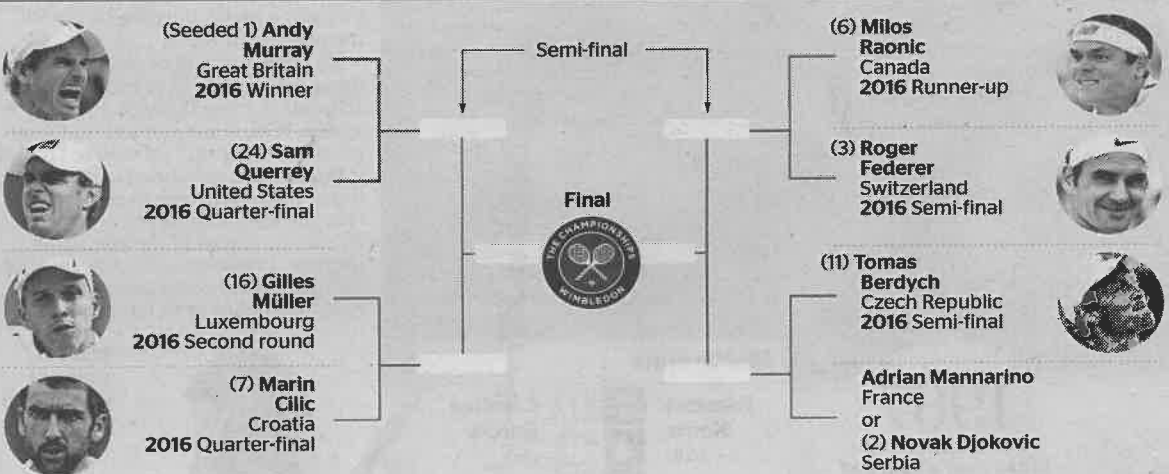
at 9-9. There were impossible cross-court half-volleys, mind-numbing saves, one of Wimbledon's most enthralling matches. At 11-10 down Nadal complained about the sun reflecting off a temporary panel high in the stands. The umpire even asked for people to stand in front of it. A steward found a shawl. It was spellbinding in every way and finally Nadal blinked. The "King of Clay" bowed in front of Prince Félix, second in line to the throne of Luxembourg and first in line to slap his tennis buddy on the back.

So who is this new hero of Wimbledon? A 17-year ATP Tour journeyman who had never won a title until this year, he is 34 and should be past it. Instead, he has won two tournaments this year, including his first on grass last month in the Netherlands. Curiously, nobody has won more games on the surface this year than this towering rock music fan.

If it is nine years since the only previous time he made the last-eight of a grand-slam event, on a different surface at the US Open, he is up to 26th in the world and flushed with the confidence that comes from having a serve that had already polished off one game this championships in four strokes.

His triumph also caps a stunning week for Luxembourg sport. Last week its part-time football team, Progrès Niederkorn, beat Rangers in the Europa League. Now Müller has beaten a genuine giant for a second time at Wimbledon — it only took four sets in

Men's singles: route to the final



2005. A Grand Duchy with a population of barely half a million is punching far above its weight.

A love service game meant Nadal first had to serve to stay in the match at 4-5. He missed a forehand. A great approach from Müller after a net cord took him to 0-30. Nerves frayed. Nadal's second double fault gave Müller two match points. Nadal saved the first with an ace, the second with an arcing second serve. When Nadal took the game with another ace his emotions spilled out and flowed to every corner of No 1 Court. It was a voyeur's delight.

Müller then held serve to love and so the match wore on. If the finish looked

close on the scoreboard, the spirit of both was such that the end seemed nigh-on impossible. Müller came within two points of winning again, but Nadal held again. In total he served to stay in the match ten times. More match points were salvaged at 9-10 but, finally, he struck a fatal forehand long.

The defeat means the first of the big four departs SW19. In some ways we should not be surprised. Since making the 2011 final, Nadal has gone past the second round only once. However, such has been this year's clay court resurgence and his easy progress here that he seemed to have the potential to become a renaissance man. The crowd

yearned for him to do so and Müller had to overcome that too.

The result also ended Nadal's hopes of emulating Bjorn Borg by winning the French Open and Wimbledon for the third time in the same year. Yet he leaves with renewed respect, all limp-like resistance and swashbuckling spinning forehands. Years of injuries might have had some writing his sporting obituary, but this will be remembered as the season of *La Decima*, a 10th triumph at Roland Garros that shows he can still do little miracles.

Nadal knew he was in trouble from early on and, sure enough, lost the first set in the past 29 he has played at grand-

# Murray 'runs like a rabbit' to reach tenth quarter-final

Stuart Fraser

Well aware that Andy Murray's hip had been causing him problems, Benoît Paire decided to give it a test yesterday by repeatedly dropping the ball short and forcing the Briton to charge forward. Paire's verdict afterwards was unequivocal: "He can run like a rabbit." Murray knows there are improvements to be made if he is to defend his Wimbledon title this year, but he was still more than content yesterday with the state of his game after a 7-6 (7-1), 6-4, 6-4 win against Paire, the world No 46. It sealed a tenth consecutive appearance in the quarter-finals, testament to his consistency at the All England Club.

"I'm moving well," Murray said. "I didn't feel like I moved that well against Fabio [Fognini, in the third round]. But in the first two matches and today, I felt like I moved really good. I certainly feel like I've been tested in that department a lot because the guys I've played against have done a lot of forward movements. I've been pushed around the court quite a bit. That's a big part of my game. If I'm struggling and not moving well, it affects my performance maybe more than other guys who don't rely on their movement as much."

In keeping with the theme of his tournament so far, Murray came up against another unorthodox opponent in Paire, who said three years ago that he hated Wimbledon, in frustration at his struggles on grass. "I love Wimbledon now," the 28-year-old joked yesterday after his first appearance in the last-16.

Paire had caused Murray problems in the past. In a third-round meeting at the Monte Carlo Masters last year, Paire was a set and a double break up, before Murray fought back. It was a match that also marked a turning point in the season for Murray, who only lost five times during the remainder of 2016 after departing the French Riviera.

Three breaks were exchanged in the first six games of the match yesterday as Paire edged ahead for 4-2, repeatedly bringing Murray forward using the drop volley. Murray barked at his box in frustration but managed to recover the break for 4-4, as Paire shanked a drive-volley and then dumped a forehand into the net.

Paire held serve twice to stay in the set but suffered a dramatic dip at the start of the tie-break. Murray won 11 of the next 12 points, claiming the tie-break 7-1 and then breaking to love in the opening game of the second set. It looked as if the Briton was starting to race away until he suddenly threw in a poor game to drop serve for 3-3.

Often diving around the court, Paire was making for good photographs but he was having little success through it. He was on the ground again as Murray charged forward to steer a backhand pick-up cross-court to help earn a break for 5-4. Murray then saved four break points before serving out for a two-set lead.

Murray was furious early in the third set after umpire Mohamed Lahyani refused to allow him to use Hawk-Eye to review a Paire serve, which had been called in. Lahyani harshly said that the challenge had not been made quick enough. Television footage later showed the serve was out.

It had no impact on the inevitable

## Consistent Scot joins elite list

Andy Murray is only the third man to appear in ten straight quarter-finals at a grand-slam event

Jimmy Connors	13
US Open 1973-1985	
Jimmy Connors	11
Wimbledon 1972-1982	
Roger Federer	11
Australian Open 2004-2014	
Roger Federer	10
Wimbledon 2003-2012	
Andy Murray	10
Wimbledon 2008-2017	

## Match stats

Andy Murray (GB)	7	6	Benoît Paire (Fra)
	6	4	
	6	4	
4	Aces		9
0	Double faults		10
71%	First serves in		54%
67%	First-serve points won		65%
69%	Second-serve points won		44%
17/26	Net points won		33/49
5/16	Break points won		3/11
55/123	Receiving points won		32/99
25	Winners		50
8	Unforced errors		44
122	Total points won		100

ble outcome of the match, though. Murray has not lost from two sets up since his first appearance at Wimbledon in 2005 and he was never going to here. He broke serve for 5-4 and comfortably served out a satisfying victory in two hours and 21 minutes.

"I've done a good job so far here," Murray said. "Today was by far the best I have hit the ball. I was happy about that. In the last couple of days, practice has been really good, as well. I didn't feel great during my last match. I definitely felt better today. That's positive moving into the last few days."

Murray's progress to the last-eight — where he will face Sam Querrey, the No 24 seed from the United States — makes this the first time since 1973 that a British male and female have reached the quarter-finals. He was candidly honest in explaining the benefit that Konta's success will have.

"It's important to have various different role models in the sport, players competing for the biggest events," Murray said. "I do think it makes a difference to the interest in the sport, because a lot of people who follow tennis in this country won't enjoy watching me play. It's true, you know."

"So it's great if you have someone like Jo or Kyle [Edmund] or whoever it is, just different players to follow. People like different game styles, different personalities. That's important."

Murray felt that he played his best match of the tournament so far against Paire, of France

## Match stats

Rafael Nadal (Sp)	3	6	Gilles Müller (Lux)
	4	6	
	6	3	
	6	4	
	13	15	
23	Aces		30
2	Double faults		10
67%	First serves in		63%
80%	First-serve points won		80%
60%	Second-serve points won		48%
33/46	Net points won		59/83
2/16	Break points won		3/8
68/212	Receiving points won		47/177
77	Winners		95
17	Unforced errors		52
198	Total points won		191

22

matches in a row Müller had lost against top five opponents before yesterday

91

minutes between Müller's first match point and his decisive one

6

Wimbledons in a row without reaching the quarter-finals for Nadal

# Nadal in a classic

## Did bang on the head cause poor start?

Before his match, Nadal tried to get himself in the mood by jumping up and down, but cracked his head on a door frame. He tried to laugh off the incident



slam level. Müller was operating at a consistently high level too, confounding Nadal with his serve and volley and then his slow, sliced returns. By the end it was his big, accurate forehand that was striking the most telling blows.

In truth, Nadal was not doing too much wrong. He made only four unforced errors in the first two sets, but Müller was forcing him into fallibility. In the end he made just 17 compared with Müller's 52, but the 6ft 3in conqueror also struck 95 winners to Nadal's 77. There was little the younger, more experienced man could do against someone who won 80 per cent of his first-serve points and the decisive stat

was only two break points won by Nadal from 16 chances.

For a player of such inveterate fight, it is surprising that Nadal had only ever come back from two sets down three times in his career. If this attempt failed the good news is his spirit is the same as when defeating Roger Federer 9-7 at Wimbledon in 2008.

This, though, was Müller's triumph more than Nadal's defeat. The man from Luxembourg had plenty of opportunities to lose but refused. We will now see whether he has a head for heights and can recover in time to face Marin Cilic in the last-eight tomorrow. Scheduling row, News, page 11

## Groth: I was offered money to throw match

Stuart Fraser

Sam Groth, the Australian world No 188, has revealed that he was offered "a lot of money" to throw a match at a British grass-court tournament.

A bribe was offered to Groth, 29, to lose a match in straight sets at the Aegon Open ATP Challenger event — the second-tier of professional tennis — in Nottingham last month. Groth has reported the approach to tennis authorities.

"It was a lot of money, but for me there's no temptation there, because I've played this sport for long enough now and respect it, and I'm not going to throw it all away for a quick earn," Groth told the *Sunday Herald Sun*.

Groth, who reached the semi-finals in Nottingham, admitted that match fixing is "well and truly a problem" in tennis.

"I think guys who haven't given themselves a chance to play in the main draw of a grand-slam, or don't see a future in what they're doing, are enticed by those offers," he added.

The Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU) insisted "all information received is logged, assessed and acted upon appropriately". Failure to report an approach can lead to disciplinary action.