

The First Day of Wimbledon a Wrap-up
By Karen Jeanne Radley

The first day of the 125th championships of Wimbledon was a bit of disappointment; in the later afternoon only matches on center court could be completed with the roof closed due to the rain. However Nadal, Murray, Zvonareva, and Venus Williams did get to take the court and gave us an early idea of what kind of shape they are in as they begin their Wimbledon campaigns.

Nadal: The defending champion Rafael Nadal began his 2011 campaign against 91st ranked American Michael Russell. Nadal struggled a bit in the early going, saving one break point and double faulting in the sixth game giving Russell a 4-2 lead. However, that is the last lead Russell will hold as Nadal ran off six straight games to win the first set and take a 2-0 lead in the second; Russell would only win four more games in the entire match. This was a great start for Nadal. His slow start in the first can be attributed to the fact that he had never played Russell and whenever Nadal faces someone he has never played he takes a few games to figure him out and once he does he takes command of the match. This is a far more positive start for Nadal than he had at the French. At the French Nadal was down 2-1 to American John Isner in the first round and there was some doubt over whether he would survive the encounter. Of course he did and went on to win the tournament. That win seems to have given his confidence a boost. For his first match at Wimbledon he seemed back to his confident self. He only had 14 unforced errors to 35 winners, and his body language which seemed so negative at Roland Garros was very positive. Does Nadal have a tough draw? Yes, but as tournaments go on Nadal always seems to improve his play with each round, and based on his performance today you have to make him one of the favorites to win the tournament.

Murray: A semi-finalist last year Andy Murray, the hometown favorite, began his campaign for his first major title against 59th ranked Spaniard Daniel Gimeno-Traver. This is a match Murray should have won easily but he was surprisingly tested. His struggles in this match were far more troubling than Nadal's. Murray dropped the first set 4-6 and remained under threat in the second set, winning it 6-3 after Gimeno-Traver began suffering the effects of a knee injury he would receive treatment for at the start of the third set. Gimeno-Traver's injury made it difficult for him to move and allowed Murray to bagel him in the last two sets. It is unclear why Murray had the struggles he did, but once again he continues to play a primarily defensive game. Murray can survive the early rounds playing this way, but when he faces more skilled opponents in later round he will need to find a way to play more offensively if he wants to win his first major.

Zvonareva: Last year's runner-up Vera Zvonareva started her Wimbledon by playing 115th ranked American, Alison Riske. The match started strong for the Russian as she won the first set 6-0. It seemed like it would be a quick victory for Zvonareva, but it did not work out that way as she lost the second set 3-6 and had to fight to avoid the upset in the third set. Zvonareva broke early in the third but Riske broke back, it wasn't until the eighth game of the set that Zvonareva got the deceive break and won the set and the match 6-3. Once again the problem is not with the Russian abilities but with her head. Once again on changeovers Zvonareva sat in her chair with her head buried in a towel looking very unsure of

herself. It is this lack of confidence that allows her to bagel her opponent in the first set only to allow her back into the match in the second set. If Zvonareva wants to make it to the final again and win it all she is going to have to start having some confidence in herself and her game.

Venus Williams: Venus Williams, the five time champion, started off strong against 97th ranked Akgul Amanmuradova of Uzbekistan. She won the match in an hour dropping just four games along the way. Williams is coming back from a long injury layoff, she has played only three matches since withdrawing from the Australian open in January with a hip injury, however watching her play today you wouldn't have known it. Her movement was sharp, as was her serve, and she continued to control the points with her powerful ground strokes. Venus's power game is made for grass and she appears to be on top of it, so she is undoubtedly a favorite to win it.

Tomorrow promises the first glimpses at many of the other tournament favorites as they take the court for their first matches. Tomorrow's marquee matches will feature: Novak Djokovic, Andy Roddick, Roger Federer, Robin Soderling, Serena Williams, and Caroline Wozniacki. Tomorrow will also feature a rematch of last year's epic first round encounter between John Isner and Nicolas Mahut.