

Important Vocab For the Editorial

1. **hard-fought** (adjective) – achieved with strong effort.
2. **glory** (noun) – fame, honour, eminence, reputation/recognition.
3. **tenuous** (adjective) – fragile, doubtful, questionable.
4. **at best** (phrase) – only, merely, simply.
5. **quite** (adverb) – in every respect, in all respects, without exception.
6. **adept** (adjective) – expert, accomplished, skilful/talented.
7. **acrylic** (noun) – synthetic fibre (court).
8. **bane** (noun) – torment, distress, hardship.
9. **unforgiving** (adjective) – harsh, hostile, severe.
10. **wear and tear** (noun) – damage, deterioration, degeneration (in ordinary use during a period).
11. **short of** (phrase) – less than.
12. **illustrious** (adjective) – notable, noteworthy, prominent.
13. **stretch** (noun) – period, time.
14. **limping** (adjective) – relating to something proceed/move with difficulty.
15. **bruising** (adjective) – stressful, demanding/taxing, painful.
16. **fraction** (noun) – tiny amount.
17. **set up** (phrasal verb) – arrange, organize, fix up.
18. **streak** (noun) – period, spell, stretch/time.
19. **hegemonic** (adjective) – dominant in a context.
20. **usher in** (phrasal verb) – herald/signal, start/, begin, announce/initiate.
21. **fleeting** (adjective) – brief, momentary, short-lived.
22. **astonishing** (adjective) – amazing, surprising, impressive/unbelievable.
23. **corner** (verb) – control, dominate.
24. **tantalising** (adjective) – exciting, interesting, alive.
25. **protagonist** (noun) – supporter, advocate/champion, proponent.
26. **crop** (noun) – batch, group (of people appearing at one time).
27. **scenario** (noun) – course of events, situation.
28. **novelty** (noun) – originality, newness, freshness.
29. **unabated** (adjective) – persistent, continuing, constant.
30. **audacity** (noun) – prowess, courage, bravery, boldness.
31. **preserve** (noun) – speciality, specialism.
32. **in tatters** (phrase) – shattered, destroyed; ruined.

Hard-fought glory: on Rafael Nadal's US open win

With his 19th Grand Slam win, Nadal closes in on Federer's record in the race for tennis' apex

Rafael Nadal's relationship with hard courts can be described as tenuous at best. While he is the king of clay and quite adept on grass, the acrylic has often been his bane. Over the

years, the Spaniard has found the surface unforgiving; from his back to both his hips right down to his knees, all have suffered significant wear and tear. Yet, none of this stopped the 33-year-old from securing his fourth U.S. Open title on Sunday, making him the most successful champion at Flushing Meadows this decade above Novak Djokovic (3). The thrilling five-set win over Russian Daniil Medvedev gave Nadal his 19th Major and puts him just one short of record-holder Roger Federer. To be sure, the surface is still his least favourite. Last month, when he won the Rogers Cup in Montreal, it was the first time in his illustrious career that he had defended a hard court title. As recently as in 2017-18, there was a stretch during which he retired or withdrew from 11 of the 12 hard court events he had entered. However, the latest triumph showed what a healthy, well-rested and mentally sharp Nadal could achieve. While in 2018 he had left New York limping, after three long, bruising encounters, Nadal this time, at least until the final, was supremely efficient. The court did its bit too; slightly below medium-pace, it gave Nadal a fraction extra to set up his shots and at the same time rewarded his recently acquired aggressive streak.

The success is also another indicator that the Big 3 of Federer, Nadal and Djokovic, all in their thirties, are still the hegemonic class in men's **tennis**. Medvedev appeared to usher in the next generation for a fleeting set or two but couldn't deny a 12th straight Major for the celebrated trio. In fact, an astonishing 51 of the last 59 Slams dating back to the 2005 French Open have been cornered by the three. What it now does is set up a tantalising endgame in the race to most Grand Slam titles. It is a competition that the protagonists Federer (20), Nadal (19) and Djokovic (16) attest to being least interested in. But coming as it does when the threat from the younger crop appears genuine, it is a compelling scenario for the fans at least. On the women's side, however, the thrill of novelty continued unabated with Canadian teen sensation Bianca Andreescu becoming the latest first-time Slam winner. In her remarkable straight sets victory over Serena Williams, the 19-year-old played with the kind of intelligence, imagination and audacity that is usually the preserve of the sport's very best, as she left the American legend's dream of a record-equalling 24th Major in tatters, yet again.