

THE WONDERFUL WET AT WIMBLEDON AND SILVERSTONE

While we in the States deal with sweltering heat across the country, our “special friends”, the Brits, are having a run of wet weather over one of the most compelling fortnights in recent history across the pond. You see, not only has Wimbledon been proceeding at the All England Club Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, but this is also the week of the famed British Grand Prix. It is not just a remarkable concurrence of perhaps the two biggest sporting events, of any year, for England; it is bigger than that. For the first time since 1939 a subject of the Kingdom, Andy Murray, is in the finals at Wimbledon. Add to that, at least three British F1 jockeys have a legitimate shot at winning the British Grand Prix at Silverstone; Lewis Hamilton, Jenson Button and Paul di Resta. Heady times in the Isles, and it is all wet. Soaking. Dripping. Wet.

First up, Wimbledon. When I started writing this, Serena Williams had just polished off Aga Radwanska 6-1, 5-7, 6-2 to win her fifth Wimbledon title. Now I, and whoever may read this, will be much further into the day than I intended*. For several reasons, I have never personally been a big Serena Williams fan, but have always respected greatly what she has accomplished. Today, I could not help but be a huge fan. Serena was herself, powerful, the face of the US, and a champion. She showed all of it on the biggest stage her sport has to offer. Simply wonderful.

The American cruised through the first set 6-1, and looked to be on a blowout roll. But Radwanska, aided by a delay from the wet weather, took the second set in a tie break and appeared to have clear momentum.

But then the power, and force of will, that is

Serena Williams took over. It was a thing of tennis beauty. Aga Radwanska showed heart and skill; someday she will be a champion. Today, Serena Williams showed Aga what a champion looks like. The wet at Wimbledon brought about something special in the Women's Final. Wow.

Almost enough to temporarily forget there is an equally compelling, if not far more so, Men's Final left on tap. Because the Men's Final at Wimbledon is another vignette of greatness in the offing. Again the rain comes in to play. Although the wet did not elongate the schedule, nor compress it grossly, it played havoc with the field. Whether weather blues, or whatever, Rafa Nadal uncharacteristically bowed out early, losing to a dude who's name is so unknown he may as well be a drummer for Spinal Tap. That opened one half of the field up and set the path for pride of the Isles, Andy Murray. The other half of the draw was another matter.

Federer was playing well, but for a brief back pain, but ran smack dab into current world number one, Novak Djokovic, in the semi-finals. Obviously Fed was a great champion of old, but would once again graciously show he was now a step behind the new guard of Djokovic.

Not so fast. This Fed came to play with everything he has ever been praised for, and reminded us once again what a transcendent thing of beauty he is for the sport of tennis. The twinkling eyes, the effortless and sweet combination of textbook groundstrokes not seen since Ilie Nastase and Roy Emerson, the pinpoint targeted serve. It was all there, and for one of the few times in recent memory, Novak Djokovic was not. Roger beating Novak may have preceded Serena by a day, but it was truly no less a wonderment of display by a champion. It may not be a geriatric Jimmy Connors at the 1991 US Open at age 39, but it was very special.

Then there is Murray. Nadal may have opened the door, but Andy Murray barged through it. The stage is somewhat understated, even in this colorful setup:

All such issues are debatable, but the general feeling is that a Murray victory – which would be the first by a British man since 1936 – would rank with England’s victory over Germany in the 1966 World Cup soccer final at Wembley Stadium. Those were the days of Bobby Charlton, Geoff Hurst and Bobby Moore, men who grow in stature as England consistently falls short in major events.

The men’s tour could use a little variety at the top. Federer, Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal have won 28 of the past 29 majors, a run of domination interrupted only by Juan Martin del Potro at the 2009 U.S. Open. Murray has played in three major finals and didn’t win a set in any: the 2008 U.S. Open (Federer), the 2010 Australian Open (Federer) and last year’s Australian (Djokovic).

Yep, pretty big stuff over the pond there. So, everybody in the world is throwing their lot and soul into the incredibly feel good story of Andy Murray, right?

Nope. Not here. I will feel great for Andy, and all the Kingdom far and wide, if Murray wins. But I grew up playing tennis, competitively for a period, from the time I was a kid. Roger Federer is a picture perfect stroke machine of timeless ease and proportion. Want to show a kid how to swing a tennis racquet? Show them Roger Federer. Jack Kramer had it all early, then Roy Emerson, then Nastase. Stan Smith the forehand, Borg the backhand, Sampras the serve and volley, McEnroe the cagy mid and net game, Andre Agassi the baseline and return and Nadal the clay. But nobody has had it all, in one package of stroke smooth, like Roger Federer. Swiss precision, beauty and perfection in motion.

Whatever happens from, and whoever comes out of, Wimbledon, it will be a story for the ages in

tennis. It is a special time for tennis, recognize it and soak it in while it is wet and wonderful.

What could possibly compete with the scene and drama playing out at the All England Club Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club? The Formula One Circus at Silverstone baybee! That is what. Along with Monaco, Monza and a bastardized Spa-Francorchamps, Silverstone is the living epitome of the history of F1. It is everything that the greatness and spectacle of Wimbledon is, both in sport and global sporting significance.

Again the wet came to frame the play and the day. Practice was blighted with the weather, but completed without a lot of fuss. Qualifying was a different matter. The rain came with six minutes and 19 seconds remaining in Q2, the second of the three knockout rounds of qualifying. But when Q2 picked up again, the remainder, and all of Q3, were epic. Check out this picture at the BBCSport. When it all was over, Fernando Alonso and Ferrari had the pole, with Mark Webber of Red Bull second and old lion Michael Schumacher and the Mercedes in P3.

Brit Jenson Button would, especially with his smooth piloting style fitting the wet perfectly, be a favorite at Silverstone. Except for some bad luck has the chap starting 18th in the field. Well, Alonso won from P11 in Valencia last time out, so you never know. Fellow Brit Lewis Hamilton in the McLaren will start from P8 and Di Resta in P11.

Silverstone with a layer of wet on top is simply a spectacular thing to behold. The track is wide, several corners fast and available for position challenge. It is a classic course of beauty. A thing of history, just like its fellow event of the same day and hour, Wimbledon.

Keep a stiff upper lip, and have a bowl of strawberries and cream. The best of the Brits is on display, and it is all wet.

*Okay. Here is the deal. I really like all the music I post, from time to time, on this blog. I

do not just throw it up, it is what I listen to, and I always listen to it while writing Trash. Today, my trusted Harman Kardon Soundsticks (here is the newest version), that I use for stereo sound off my computer, crapped out. Mine were version 1.0 and I had had them for ten years or so, and they still kicked ass.

Until today. One started buzzing like it had a nuclear fly in it. As I went to check it out, I knocked the other one off the opposite end of the ledge I had them both perched on for optimal stereo separation. Then that one started buzzing too. Jeebus. I was apoplectic. Because, well, this was my sound source. Ugh.

New, version 3.0 Soundsticks are available for the pretty reasonable price of \$125.00 from Amazon (and I actually highly recommend the same), but that did not solve my problem today. So I started checking around for some sort of module/device that would allow me to play music wirelessly through my main stereo system. My main stereo is very nice stuff, but totally classic analog equipment; it would not recognize a USB plug if it hit it in the head.

My ER doctor prick, er friend, reminded me I bought something like that years ago and probably still had it since I do not throw things away. He was right, but in looking for it, I caused a giant crate of old junk to fall from a high shelf in my garage, and it crashed on my shoulder and then hand. Substantial and multiple modalities of medication were applied, and.....I had a nice nap. Ergo, this post is about 10-12 hours late. Sorry about that chief! Yes, you simply **must** click this last link.

This is all a good reminder that Harman (Sidney) was not just Jane's addiction and husband, and last gasp owner of Newsweek, but a seriously important stereo component manufacturer and entrepreneur. Music this week by Jackson Browne, Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan and Jimmy Barnes. All great. You may not know Barnes as well as the others, because he has mostly stuck to his home of Australia, but he is great too.

Oh, and one last thing. Eli is not that elite, nor Tom that terrific. Fear The Cheese people. Phred and I have reinforcements coming. And I'm a getting a real live Cheesehead before the start of the season. From Wisconsin and everything. Marcy's Kittenhs are gonna all be in jail. Fear The Cheese.