

## It's No Sacrifice!

Two stars & a fan...

**Houston. Last night.** *I hadn't planned it. I had not set any alarm. Nor had I slept early. And it is the second week of my business travel, so the jetlag factor is not applicable. Yet my sleep had broken. I couldn't figure out the time. Except, there was no sunrise yet. The city lights were dancing through the window sheers of my 27th floor room. 'Might as well considering I am already awake', I concluded. I turned on the TV and flipped over to ESPN. It was a good decision. It was a night well spent. It was a gentlemen's night out – Federer, Nadal and I...*

Watching Tennis is not really my passion. I have a tremendous respect for the sport, but somehow I have never watched it with a time investment compelling enough to get me hooked. The last complete game that I vividly recall dates back to 2009. [Roger Federer](#) and [Rafael Nadal](#) at the Australian Open finals. There is a reason I remember that match. The invincible Federer had [cried](#) like a baby after losing to Nadal. So much so that Nadal's eyes also welled up as he consoled Federer. The episode had touched my heart. Perhaps this might be the reason that I had subconsciously woken up at an unearthly hour, hoping for a rematch of the legendary 'hearts'...

Yesterday's 2017 Australian Open final was not expected to deliver spectacular tennis. Both the top seeds—[Andy Murray](#) and [Novak Djokovic](#)—had been knocked out in the early rounds. Whoever would have dreamt of a possible finals clash between 17th seed Roger and 9th seed Rafael? No doubt, it was a stuff dreams are made of, but not because any new records were to be broken. With 17 Grand Slam titles under Federer's belt, and 14 trophies in Nadal's closet—both the contenders were locked in at their all-time 1st and 2nd positions regardless of the outcome.

Instead this match was historical because, in all likelihood, it was a grand sendoff for the 35 year-old Federer. Sure Federer hasn't announced his retirement from the professional circuit yet, but he is a shadow of his glory days. The last time he held the grand slam trophy was five years back (2012, Wimbledon). To further diminish his odds, a serious knee injury had kept him out of action for the preceding six months. But win or lose, the world anticipated that this was their final shot to see Federer at a Grand Slam stage. And the historic farewell to the sport's greatest didn't deserve Novak or Andy on the other side of the net. It was only befitting that curtains were to fall with arch rivals standing side by side!

Nadal himself has not been getting any younger. At 30, he has struggled over the last couple of years with a wrist injury and seen his ratings steadily decline. He hasn't won any grand slam for more than two years now. So the game was evenly placed between the two bruised superheroes. It was a feel-good game, like an exhibition match. While all fans had their favorite, they were more interested in the fireworks. The test on the court was not of the biological superiority, but the goodbye chemistry between the twin maestros.

It was like watching a climax of a happy ending movie. Yes, the game lived up to the

expectations, a seesaw till the end. [Federer reigned](#). However, this blog is not about the scorecard, but the wildcard. Is there a hidden leadership lesson that doesn't meet the eye here? If yes, then the clue perhaps doesn't lie on the court, rather during the pregame and postgame shows. The pregame interviews exuded a boyish excitement of the rivals for having made it together to the final, as if they were on a prom night date! Neither of them appeared too bothered about winning or losing. The postgame show had no tears, only smiles. They dedicated their [speeches](#) to each other. Federer went to the extent of declaring he would have been fine losing the game; how he wished joint winners were allowed—so that he could share his trophy with Nadal!



And that poses an intriguing question. Why would Federer go through the gruesome training amidst serious injuries that the sport of professional tennis demands, when he has already achieved his nirvana over his peaks? How is it even possible to be the best when the fire within has been extinguished? Why did he put himself through months of sacrifices when he is already content with what he has achieved?

It is a pertinent question for anyone who has achieved success in life, business and professional leaders included. What drives successful people who have already achieved enough money, status and satisfaction? What pushes them to achieve more? The answer lies behind the curtains of 2017 Australian Open.

Both, Roger and Rafael, live a glamour-free life. They live in a closed family environment—committed to the same partner for over a decade, are grounded, and associate with their pre-limelight friends with no time for socialite parties. In fact, they don't mingle with each other in spite of being the [closest of friends](#)! Their limited distractions are their foundations revolving around underprivileged children. So what good is their fame if they have to live such a low-key life? They have 'sacrificed' the spoils of success to achieve what they have achieved.

At least, that's what the world believes!

*The world has got it wrong. If you were to deep dive on Google, you will discover that Federer and Nadal don't feel that they have 'sacrificed' anything. They do what they do because they massively 'enjoy' what they do! And that is what makes Federer and Nadal the greatest duo ever in the game of tennis. They symbolize the story of most successful people — achievers don't work hard, they play hard. They are invigorated by the passion of the game. Do you agree?*