

SERBIAN ATHLETES MAKE HISTORY

By Milos Rastovic

During the recent Saint Sava weekend, Serbian athletes had three history-making wins in tennis, water polo and handball. Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic beat Spanish tennis player Rafael Nadal (5:7, 6:4, 6:2, 6:7, 7:5) in the epic five-set battle of the final match at the Australia Open 2012 in Melbourne. The Serbian water polo team beat Montenegro's team 9:8 at the European championships in Eindhoven to win a Gold medal. The water polo team was the world champion, the World League champion, the World Cup champion, and now the European champion for the second time. Their next step is this year's Olympic Games in London. In the final match of the European Handball championships in Belgrade, the Danish team beat our Serbian team 21:19, but the Serbs took the Silver medal. Veselin Vukovic, coach of the Serbian handball team, says that they are very proud of their success and that this is the new beginning of Serbian handball.

In the longest Grand Slam final of 5:53 minutes, Novak Djokovic, ranked number one in the world, defended his third Australia Open single title. He remains the master of Rafael Nadal by besting him in their last seven final matches. After the final match with Nadal, Djokovic said: "We made history tonight. Everything is just outrageous. I suffered during the match, but I enjoyed all the troubles that I had." Tom Perrotta of the *Wall Street Journal* said, "The search for the most physically punishing, dramatic, tense and mentally exhausting athletic competition on earth is over. Tennis has won – in a rout." ¹ *Politika*, the Serbian newspaper, said that the world has never seen this kind of match. *The New York Times* wrote that Djokovic became "one of those special athletes who transcends the confines of sport, a figure whose achievements on the field of play teach us not only new things about sporting endeavor but also about bottomless well of human pos-

sibility." ² Christopher Clarey of *The New York Times*, said that we forget 'The big four,' because it is now all about Djokovic: "Will it be the 'Djoker Slam,' the 'Djoko Slam' or the 'Nole Slam' if he becomes the first man since Laver in 1969 to hold all four Grand Slam singles titles?" Djokovic plans to play many tournaments this year, but he will prioritize the Grand Slam and the Olympic Games in London. The French Open is the only Grand Slam that Djokovic has not yet won. "I have never been in finals there, and I have a feeling that I'm ready this year to achieve that," he said. Djokovic has won five Grand Slam single titles.³ Nadal has won ten, and Roger Federer has won 16.

His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Alexander II, extended his congratulations to Djokovic for beating Nadal. "My family and I send you our warmest congratulations for the extraordinary results you have accomplished during this tournament. Once again you have impressed us with your play, skills, and persistence. We are proud of you and so is the whole of Serbia. You are also like a super ambassador for Serbia. Well done!" he said in a letter sent to Djokovic.

His Royal Highness extended congratulations also to the Serbian water polo team and to the Serbian handball team. He hopes that all of our athletes keep up the good results and good work, to make us proud at the Olympics this year.

President Boris Tadic of Serbia expressed his pride in making sports history on January 29, 2012 not only for Serbia, but for the entire Balkan region. He said that Serbian athletes clearly demonstrated that they play the best tennis, the best water polo and are competition in handball. He wished them all the best for the coming Olympic Games in London this year.



1 Tom Perrotta, *The Wall Street Journal*. "With 'Outrageous' Aussie Win, Djokovic Sets Sights on Paris." January 30, 2012.

2 By the Associated Press, *The New York Times*. "Column: Djokovic, Greatest Athlete Out There?" January 30, 2012.

3 Christopher Clarey, *The New York Times*. "Forget 'The Big Four' – It's Now All About Djokovic." January 30, 2012.



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See page 5 for this issue's Happy Wishes