

Wimbledon 2012: Roger Federer admits is 'felt great' to win at SW19 as he equalled Pete Sampras record

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HISTORY was made at Wimbledon yesterday – but not in the way the majority of the Centre Court crowd had hoped.

Andy Murray's dream of becoming the first British champion for 76 years was ended.

Instead, it was ruthless Roger Federer who continued to write his name into the All England Club record books as he defeated Murray 4-6 7-5 6-3 6-4 to join his hero Pete Sampras and William Renshaw as the only men to have won seven times.

The disappointment of seeing Murray beaten was eased slightly by the fact the man on the opposite side of the net produced sublime tennis to end a 30-month wait – a drought by his standards – to win a Grand Slam. Not since he beat Murray at the Australian Open in 2010 had the swashbuckling Swiss lifted a major.

But he was back on familiar territory yesterday as he celebrated an astonishing 17th Grand Slam title.

Maybe all the talk of Bunny Austin, the last Brit to reach a Wimbledon final before Murray yesterday, should have served as a warning. He was beaten pretty convincingly by American Don Budge back in 1938, winning just four games in the process.

Murray at least put up a real fight and even took the opening set. But there could be no doubt the better player won and any pre-match talk of Federer being past his best was clearly premature. Speaking on court after his win, with wife Mirka and twin daughters Myla Rose and

Charlene Riva in the crowd, the Wimbledon legend said: "It feels great being back here as the winner.

"It feels nice to have my hands on the trophy again – like it's never left me. It feels so familiar. I've obviously missed playing in the finals and it's a great moment for me.

"I've gone through some struggles. There have been a lot of changes in my life so this one, like any Grand Slam victory, comes at the right time. I'm now level with Pete Sampras who is my hero and it feels amazing. It's a truly magical moment."

Federer is now restored to world No.1 – the second-oldest man behind Andre Agassi to take the top ranking – and joins only two men aged 30 or over who have won Wimbledon in Rod Laver and Arthur Ashe. Having been written off in recent times with the emergence of Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, this success was the perfect response. But he's worked hard for it.

He said: "You aren't gifted world No.1 status. I was two sets up in the Wimbledon quarter-finals last year and two sets up at the US Open. I had so many chances but maybe I got nervous or my opponents were just too good. But I never stopped believing.

"I started playing more, even though I have a family, and it all worked out. I got great momentum and confidence and it came together. But this one hasn't quite sunk in yet for some reason.

"I guess I was trying to be so focused in the moment itself that when it all happened I was just so happy it was all over and the pressure was gone. I guess that came due to the tough loss I had here last year and in the US Open as well.

"So I really almost didn't try to picture myself with the trophy or try to think too far ahead. There was so much on the line I tried not to think of the world ranking or the seventh or the 17th titles.

"For a change, I think it will take much longer to understand what I was able to achieve today. It was crazy how it all happened under the circumstances. I played terrific.

"Any Grand Slam final, particularly here at Wimbledon, is unusual. You never quite get used to it.

"But today was unique because of playing Andy and being able to finish a match under the roof.

"I know the occasion and how big it was for Andy and myself. I'm happy I got a victory today and obviously it was very special.

"I feel better here for some reason. I don't know why. From the get-go I really felt I was supposed to play well here.

"This year I decided in bigger matches to take it more to my opponent instead of waiting for the mistakes. I'm obviously older now.

"There were times I had such incredible confidence and you pull off shots that maybe today I don't.

"I know how hard it is to pull off those great shots and I know how easy it is to miss, so I'm more aware.

"But I'm so happy I'm at the age I am right now because I had such a great run and I know there's still more possible. It's very different than when I was 20 or 25. I'm at a much more stable place in my life."

Federer had a quiet word with Murray after he struggled to compose himself during his on-court interview.

The Swiss ace said: "I told him the interview was supposed to be easier than playing the match. It's hard. I've been there.

"He's done so well. I see what he goes through on a daily basis on tour. At Wimbledon I think he handles it so perfectly.

"I really believe he will win Grand Slams, not just one. He works extremely hard. He's as professional as you can be. Things just didn't quite turn out for him today.

"But I'm sure he got another step closer to a Grand Slam title. I really believe and hope for him he's going to win one soon."