

## Men's Tennis

# Wimbledon 2011: How Novak Djokovic Has Taken over the Tennis World

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Novak Djokovic started out the 2011 season on an unstoppable run, winning 41 straight games and 43 extending back to 2010, a feat unmatched since 1984.

His streak ended in the French Open after a loss to Roger Federer in the semifinals, but he has still displayed a stronger and more consistent game than in his previous years.

His dominance ultimately culminated in a victory over Rafael Nadal in the Wimbledon finals en route to a well-deserved championship and world No. 1 ranking.

But how exactly has Djokovic taken the tennis world by storm?

Many credit his success this year to a gluten-free diet that he adopted after discovering he was allergic to the ingredient.

The removal of the daily foods such as pizza, bread, pretzels and other gluten-containing foods from his diet has improved Djokovic's on-court play.

As recently as last year, Djokovic's struggles were evident near the end of matches. He lacked the energy to hit closing shots, grew sloppy with his serve and encountered breathing problems.

Now, his allergen-free diet has left him feeling energized through to the end of the match. He is sharper physically and mentally, especially in closing out the Wimbledon finals after Nadal pushed toward a comeback.



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Besides his diet, the Serbian has improved his fitness and mental fortitude.

He has figured out ways to beat Federer and Nadal, matching his opponents' energy and maintaining a level head until the very end.

"Everything is possible. You can do it if you fit well with the team of people around you and focus on your goal...to be physically ready for the match. We did a great job and today I was able to get the maximum out of my fitness," Djokovic said at a press conference after beating Nadal in the Rome final.

He is also drawing confidence from having won the Davis Cup with Serbia last year.

"I know that feelgood moment is also definitely playing an important role in my success, the success I'm having right now and this confidence that I am feeling."

Winning has bred confidence, and that confidence has bred more wins.

"I'm not thinking about losing a match, but rather I'm trying to think about winning every match and focusing on being professional."

This newfound poise and coolness is clear in his game. He has been frighteningly aggressive on service returns, delivering on the big points, keeping himself in points with his court coverage.



Pool/Getty Images

Djokovic also credits his electrifying start to the season to an adjustment to his serve.

“My serve is back and working, which is really important for me,” he said. “I was struggling in the last year and a half with that element of my game and I was working really hard, so that hard work is paying off now.”

“With a good service you can get some free points, which is really important at this level.”

His streamlined serve has yielded improvement that is evident in serve statistics.

Djokovic ended 2010 inside the top 10 of only one key serving statistic: break points saved (67 percent).

On the other hand, during his 43-game winning streak, he was third in service games won with 89 percent, second in break points saved at 72 percent and first in second-serve points won with 56 percent.

With improvements to his diet, fitness, confidence and serve, Djokovic has transformed himself from contender to champion and now represents the greatest threat to Nadal’s reign.

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