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Spaniard Rafael Nadal joined the ranks of professional tennis competition in 2001 and competed in merely a single Grand Slam event as a junior competitor. He made it all of the way to the Wimbledon semifinals the following year and went on to win the French Open 4 uninterrupted times between 2005 and 2008. He also earned a men's singles gold gong during the 2008 Olympics in China.

Born in Manacor, Spain he picked up a tennis racquet for the first time when he was just three years old. Being a previous tennis player, his uncle Toni introduced him to the game and, as his coach, had a major influence on his development. Later he would serve as Rafael's coach on the professional tour.

Though he was naturally right-handed, his early playing strategy featured a two-handed backhand and forehand. At the age of 12, his uncle encouraged a more conventional left-handed style. The result was a two-handed backhand and an one-handed forehand that would become his signature stroke and at last raise him to superstar status.

His win over Andy Roddick, who was ranked 2nd at the time, played an important role in Spain's win over the US in the 2004 Davis Cup.

As a featured player on the Association of Executives tour in 2005, he became rivals with Swiss player Roger Federer, who was the number 1 ranked rival at the time. That year he upset Federer during the semifinals and went on to win the French Open in his first appearance at Roland Garros. He beat Federer in the finals in 2006 to record his second successive French Open victory.

His 11 tournament wins in 2005 was a record for teenage male players. After besting his Swiss rival for a fourth successive title at Roland Garros he beat him at Wimbledon in a last match that took nearly five hours to complete. That victory made him the first man to gather Wimbledon and French Open victories in the same year since 1980 when Bjorn Borg accomplished the accomplishment.

He took the number one ranking from the Swiss professional in 2008, the same year he won the gold medal for men's singles in the Beijing Olympic Games. He completed a vocation Grand Slam in 2010 when he won his first U. S. Open title.

Rafael [Nadal](#) gives back to his country through the philanthropic efforts of a foundation that bears his name. Established in 2008, the foundation is focused on providing development help for deprived kids in Spain.

Matt Harmon has been an avid tennis player for 25 years. His passion is to highlight and follow the greatest tennis players of all time like [Rafael Nadal](#), also known as [Rafa](#).

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