

Good person from small village retires

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Gracious: Nadal (above) made the Davis Cup finals, in Spain, his last event after accepting that his body would no longer allow him to compete at tennis's highest level.

Is this phrase Nadal's greatest ace? As the tennis legend played his final match, he chose to reflect not on his monumental career, but on his life, his roots, and his friendships.

What's happening?

Tennis ace Rafael Nadal's home in Mallorca hosts one of the biggest trophy cabinets in the world, with no fewer than 92 singles titles, including a near-record 22 **grand slams**.

His sporting ability is legendary, but so too is his reputation as one of the good guys of tennis.

Playing his last ever match in Spain this week, after a remarkable 23-year career, this modest Spaniard said he would like to be remembered as "a good person from a small village in Mallorca".

Find out more

Even as he and fellow tennis legend Roger Federer battled each other on court, they became firm friends. When Federer retired in 2022, he asked Nadal to play with him one last time — not as an opponent, but as his doubles partner.

Which brings us back to Nadal's phrase: a good person from a small village.

A person, not a tennis legend, but someone who is really just the same as everyone else. And from a small village: no matter how humble one's origins, through hard work and the right attitude we all can achieve some form of greatness.

Is this phrase Nadal's greatest ace?

Some say

Yes! Few people will ever achieve as much as Nadal has by the age of 38. Yet he chose to use his platform to promote goodness and kindness to others.

Others think

No! No one would be listening to Rafa's pearls of wisdom if he had not hit a very large number of real aces over the past 23 years.

Some people say

"If you don't lose, you cannot enjoy the victories. So I have to accept both things."

Rafael Nadal (1986 –), Spanish tennis player

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Did you watch Nadal's final match? If you did, what feelings did it inspire?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Can anyone be great? Does it matter how we are remembered?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Rafael Nadal was a top tennis player for 23 years. How can we make sense of this time period?

Draw up a timeline with the major events of Nadal's career.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - What really matters more: career success or being a good person to those around you?

5. Express

What do others believe? - Get into small groups and research a person whose moral character you all admire. Agree why they are such a good example to others.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - When you leave school, how might you summarise the end of your own school career? Write a short speech in the style of Rafa Nadal's on-court comments.

Glossary

Grand Slams - The Grand Slam tournaments, also known as the majors, are the four most important international professional tennis events. They are the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open.