



# li na

## CHINA'S FIRST GRAND SLAM WINNER

By the fourth round of the 2011 Australian Open, China's Li Na was confident with her game and her chances against the tour's top players. When asked why she beat Victoria Azarenka so decisively, 6-3, 6-3, Na replied, "Because I'm better, so I won the match." The statement was one of many one-liners that bolstered her popularity. Li would, however, fall painfully short in her first Grand Slam final to a resourceful Kim Clijsters.

Li entered the second Slam of the year, Roland Garros, with great focus. She would advance to the finals where she faced the feisty Francesca Schiavone of Italy. When the petite Schiavone hit an errant backhand on match point, Li slid to the clay. Approximately 116 million Chinese watched the monumental victory on television, as Li became the first Chinese player to win a Grand Slam. Her rise to stardom was immediate.

"If don't do well in Wimbledon," Li said with a laugh, "maybe people will forget me already."

# novak djokovic's

## 43-MATCH WINNING STREAK

Little did we know that Novak Djokovic's third consecutive loss to Roger Federer last November would be Djokovic's last taste of defeat for a long time.

A very long time.

Djokovic rallied in December 2010 to lift Serbia to an emotional Davis Cup title. The soul-queening victory was his first step in a long journey towards placing him at the top of tennis's pecking order.

All told, Djokovic's streak lasted 43 matches, stretched

across six months, traversed four continents, wore down two living legends (he was a combined 7-0 vs. Nadal and Federer) and brought the imagination of sports fans worldwide to a boil.

It was improbable, captivating, mind-boggling and beautiful. With each passing title (there were seven), the buzz brewed and the admiration grew. He was 13-0 vs. top 10 players and lost only 10 sets during the streak.

In all his gluten-free glory, Djokovic took tennis to a new level – where it

remains. With a beefed-up serve, electric returns and a new penchant for delivering in the clutch, Djokovic single handedly put the kibosh to the Federer-Nadal duopoly that had ruled tennis since 2004.

The streak ended at the hands of Federer in the Roland Garros semifinals, but the numbers had already spoken: Federer's win was a huge accomplishment, but Djokovic's 43-match winning streak was the boldest statement of 2011.

