

Nadal was named Sportsman of the Year after a remarkable season in which he won the French Open, Wimbledon and US Open trophies while Spain's World Cup side were named Team of the Year at a glittering ceremony attended by celebrities and sporting greats.

"It's an honour, in my name, that of my colleagues and the Spanish football federation, to receive this award from the world of sport," Spain coach Vicente del Bosque said in a live feed to the awards ceremony from the team's training base outside Madrid.

American Alpine skier Lindsay Vonn, who won the Olympic downhill gold at the Vancouver Games last February just days after suffering a shin injury, was voted Sportswoman of the Year.

Spain, the USA and Germany were the big winners with each country bagging two awards.

There was a rapturous welcome for French football great Zinedine Zidane, who received the Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his remarkable career.

The Spirit of Sport Award was presented to the European Ryder Cup Team to mark their emotional win over the United States in a match "which demonstrated great sportsmanship, golf played at the highest level and enormous and passionate galleries", a statement from the organisers said.

The Laureus World Sports Awards, which recognise sporting achievement, are the premier honours on the international sporting calendar.

Double Oscar winner Kevin Spacey hosted the event attended by celebrities from the world of sports and entertainment.

The award winners were:

- Laureus World Sportsman of the Year: Rafael Nadal (Spain)
- Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year: Lindsey Vonn (US)
- Laureus World Team of the Year: Spain World Cup
- Team Laureus World Breakthrough of the Year: Martin Kaymer (Germany)
- Laureus World Comeback of the Year: Valentino Rossi (Italy)
- Laureus World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability: Verena Bentele (Germany)
- Laureus World Action Sportsperson of the Year: Kelly Slater (US)