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QMSS 4063 – Data Visualization

Assignment 2: Write-up

10 March 2014

**Story:**

A top athlete’s beauty is next to impossible to describe directly. Or to evoke. Federer’s forehand is a great liquid whip... His serve has world-class pace and a degree of placement and variety no one else comes close to; the service motion is lithe and uneccentric, distinctive (on TV) only in a certain eel-like all-body snap at the moment of impact.

— David Foster Wallace, “Federer as a Religious Experience,” *New York Times* (20 August 2006), web.[[1]](#footnote-1)

While I enjoy watching a good rally between opponents, I personally think that aces are sometimes the most exciting part of the game. Like most other people (at least I believe so), I prefer to look at championship matches. So I altered the original data file, cutting it down to size.

As I was looking at the raw number of aces in the U.S. Open final matches, some figures really stood out. For example, in the 2013 match of Nadal v. Djokovic, Nadal only aced Djokovic once compared to Djokovic’s six, and yet (from the dataset, which is a part of the zip file), Nadal still had nearly 20 points on his opponent. And then I got interested in errors.

In the 2013 match, Nadal only let 20 points by on mistakes, compared to Djokovic’s 53 error points. That generally seemed to be the case if the champion wasn’t dominating in aces (i.e. making it up by not letting errors slip).

Visualizing it:

I like looking at scatterplots more than I like looking at other visual forms of data (bar charts, pie charts seem to me to be too misleading for visual analysis, and maps and tree diagrams wouldn’t have worked here), so I already knew where to begin.

I had initially tried to set up a document such that the same points (by year/game) would animate and remap to their new positions as the graph transitioned from “Aces” to “Errors” (you can see my failed efforts in the folder, which is titled “Too Ambitious” in the zip file). But, instead I had to settle for two separate graphs, linked together via a simple HTML tag.

1. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/20/sports/playmagazine/20federer.html?pagewanted=all&\_r=0 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)