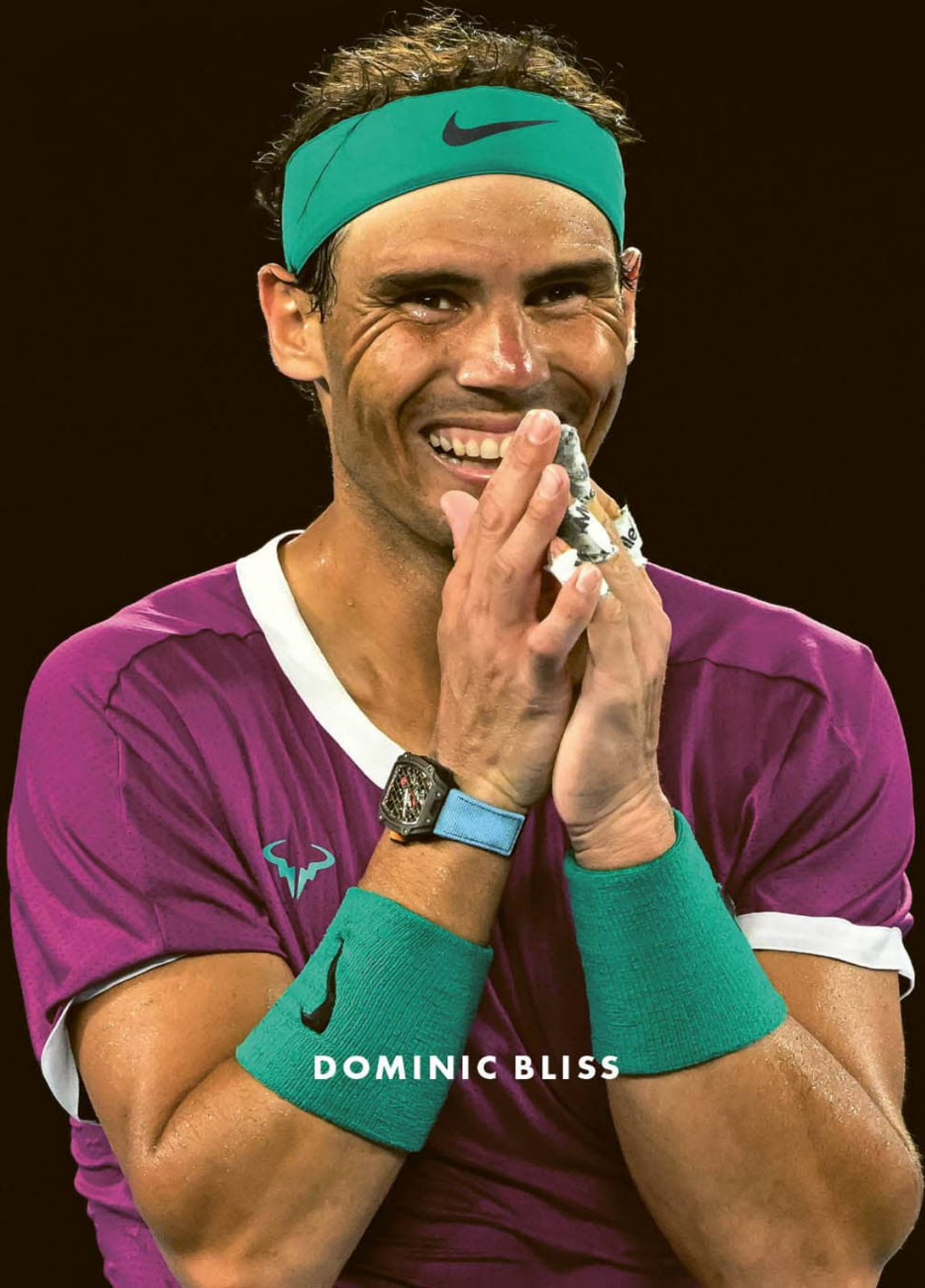


# RAFA NADAL

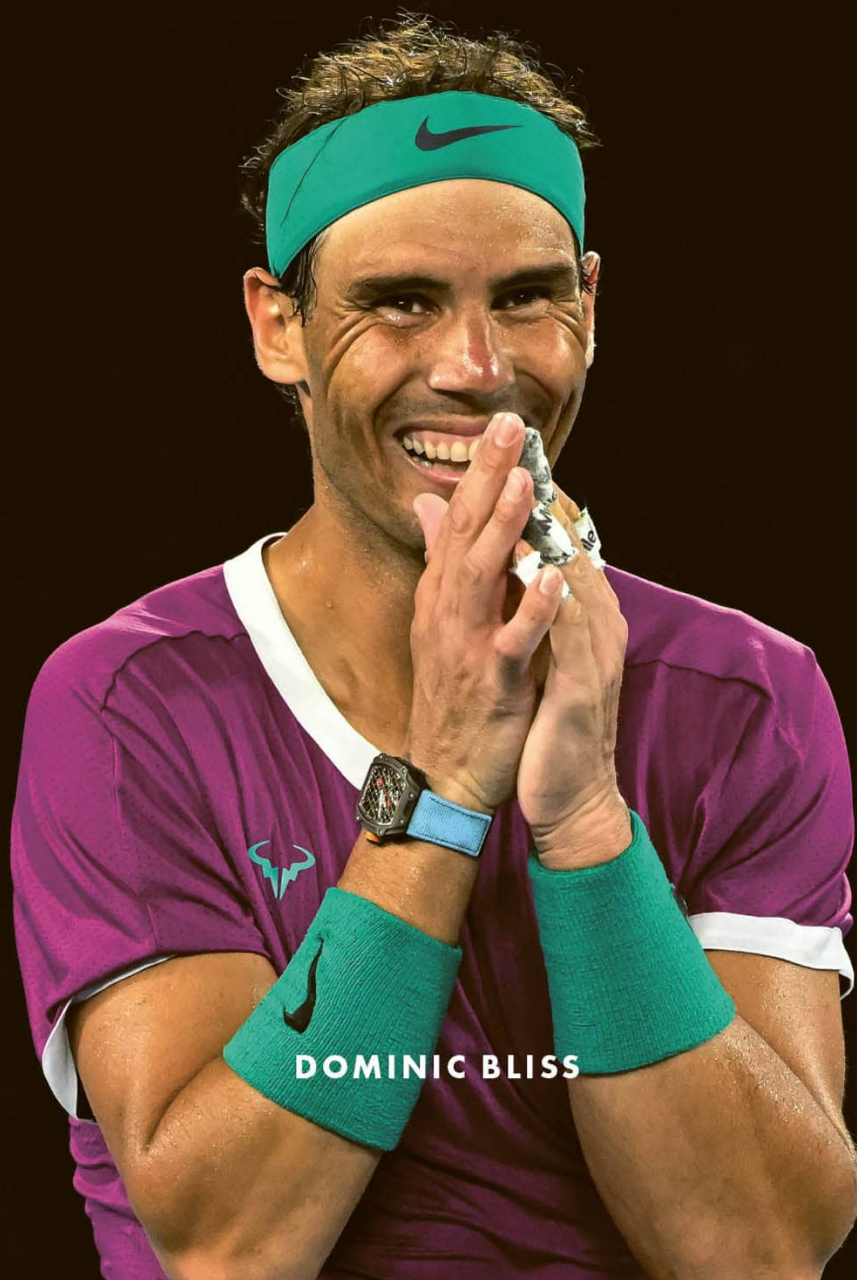
THE KING OF THE COURT



DOMINIC BLISS

# RAFA NADAL

THE KING OF THE COURT



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# RAFA NADAL

## THE KING OF THE COURT

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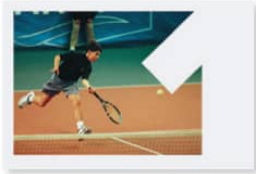


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# INTRODUCTION

They call him the “raging bull”. When you see Rafa charging and sweating round the court, grinding opponents into submission with a combination of power, speed and raw muscle, it’s obvious why. The nickname even gave rise to the personal logo you see on his tennis kit and merchandise – two symmetrical bull horns and thunderbolts.

Don’t be fooled by all this taurine machismo though. Inside the muscular superhero you see on court is a human being as vulnerable as the rest of us. Every now and then that vulnerability exhibits itself in Rafa’s quirky ticks and rituals.

That is what makes this man so intriguing: a combination of mere mortal and Herculean demi-god, or Clark Kent and Superman, as he himself once explained it. Sometimes one has the impression that beneath the superhero exoskeleton is a scared little boy peeping out. After all, as you’ll discover in these pages, this is a grown man who still sleeps with the light on and is upset by thunderstorms.

This book examines in depth these two aspects of Rafa’s persona – the superman and the little boy. It places him firmly in his island home of Mallorca. It questions how he has become defined by other attributes: his left-handedness, his aggressive playing style, his business interests, his Spanishness, his Uncle Toni, his family and friends, his wife Mery, and his insatiable appetite for more and more Grand Slam titles.

Interspersed between these examinations of Rafa’s human side are ten of the most important matches of his career so far. Starting with his first major scalp on the ATP tour, back in 2003, we chart the peaks of his career, as he developed into the world-beating force that we all know and love today. Included are his key Grand Slam mileposts, his debut Davis Cup Final and his Olympic gold medal match.

Meanwhile, dotted throughout the book is a series of statistical infographics offering another crucial insight into his on-court career. Sport, especially a sport like tennis, is always a combination of human character and mathematical statistics. To truly understand Rafa the tennis player, both aspects need to be assessed.



Rafa after his win at the Australian Open in 2022.



“It’s true that I went through some tough situations during all my career. But with the positive attitude and with the right people around – they were a key – I was able to find a way to keep going.”

Rafa Nadal

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## EARLY YEARS

