

Tennis Books to Fire Your Game



By Barbara Wyatt

I decided to read a tennis book to improve my game, and complement my practices in drills and lessons with instructors. But let's face it ... I need more than a book, I need a library.

To begin my learning-tennis-by-the-book quest, I started with *Game, Set and Match* (2015) by Mark Hodgkinson. It was there that tennis professional, Maria Kirilenko, ranked 10th in the world in 2013, spoke directly to me from the pages and instructed me to take many little steps, a minimum of 10, between points to improve my footwork. Gael Monfils, ranked sixth in the world in 2016, suggested yoga and hip-hop classes to improve flexibility.

I picked up a copy of *Tennis Science for Tennis Players* (1987) by Dr. Howard Brody. As I turned the pages of this book, rich in tennis physics and mathematics, Brody seemed to sit down beside me and plot the conditional probability of my serves. If my first serve goes in 40 percent of the time and I win 70 percent, and my weaker second serve goes in 85 percent

of the time and I win 60 percent, what is my serving strategy? Only use my second serve? Use first and second? Answer: First and second.

I opened the pages of *Tennis Science: How Player and Racquet Work Together* (2015) by Machar Reid, Bruce Elliott and Miguel Crespo. One diagram illustrates how a less skilled player will randomly catch a few hints during an opponent's serve, then watch the flight of the ball to calculate where the opponent's ball will land. A highly skilled player can systematically zero into specific cues within the 300 milliseconds before the ball hits the opponent's racquet.

I also need mental conditioning to improve my game. This could get ugly, which meant one thing ... I dove into the pages of *Winning Ugly: Mental Warfare in Tennis: Lessons From a Master* (1994) by Brad Gilbert. I vowed to incorporate his five-minute dynamic warmup, as well as his pre-match game plans.

More wisdom awaited me in *The Inner Game of Tennis: The Classic Guide to the Mental Side of Peak Performance* (1997) by W. Timothy Gallwey's and *Zen Tennis: Play-*

ing in the Zone (2015) by Bill Scanlon & Dr. Joe Parent. Gallwey begged me to trust my body and visualize where I wanted the ball to land. Drs. Scanlon & Parent educated me on the strategies to achieve good tennis more often.

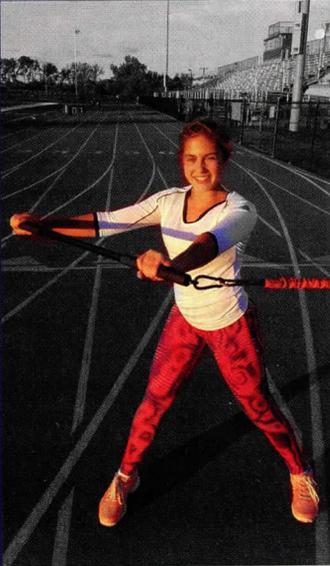
Then, I called on the master himself, Vic Braden, who spoke to me from the pages of his book, *Mental Tennis* (1994). I learned an approach on how to deal with opponents who have difficulty calling my balls in.

Lastly, I read one of my own works, *Ode to Tennis* (2017), a small gift book that illustrates tennis is a game of many brilliant strokes, followed by a few boneheaded ones. *Ode to Tennis* reminds us that tennis is a fun passionate journey of exercise, competition and friendship as we move toward better tennis.

Barbara Wyatt is a writer, photographer, USTA official, and mobile app developer of iKnowTennis!, the tennis rules app. Her poem, Ode to Tennis, an amusing poem on the joys and frustrations when learning tennis, is available at Amazon. She can be reached by e-mail at BarbaraW@iKnowTennis.com.



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