

Dear Andre Agassi,

Your life and experiences have helped shape the way I play, the way I think, and even the way I look at life. Above all else, we share the same love-hate relationship with tennis. I play tennis, but I look upon it from a different point of view than you did when you were my age. I play because I love it; not because I'm forced by my father. But tennis is tennis, and I'm sure that you feel the same satisfaction as I do when you hit a winner across the court. I possess a similar mentality to the one that you have on the court; it's all about if I win this game I can win the set, then if I win the next two games I will have a chance. There are times when I hate it too, but I keep playing.

Upon reading your book, I felt fascinated by your difficult life and great success. I read it a second time and then realized that I wanted to be like you. I hit against a wall when I got home from school every day for two hours and slowly got better and better until I was asked to play in a series of matches at my free tennis club. The top two winners would be put on the team. That had been my goal since I started playing tennis. For four years I watched the kids around me win their matches and earn their places on the team. I kept losing.

Finally this time, I secured a spot on the team and now had longer practices than before. Sometimes I was sick or tired but still kept going. I told the coaches that I was going to practice more and be like Andre. They saw that I meant it. I kept going because of you. I kept going because when I compared what I was going through to what you went through, my difficulty seemed like nothing.

I started off the summer with little to do and few friends to have fun with. I thought that tennis was my only friend, and that it was all that I could ever do. See, I wasn't that good in school either because I didn't believe that I could ever succeed. I always would get so far, then fail at the end. The tennis club offered an essay contest. The winner would receive a free week at an Adidas tennis camp. I never entered an essay contest before. I didn't think my writing would ever be good enough to win. This time, I would give it my best effort. I would show them my love of the sport, my dedication, and my desire to be like you. I won the contest and attended tennis camp in Connecticut. I could not believe it! I met new friends from other countries and gained confidence. I was good enough!

I sometimes look back on what happened and think, "Wow, if it hadn't been for you, I never would have reached my goal of earning a spot on the tennis team. I would have the same frustrated life I had before." Thank -you Andre, not as a fan, but as a friend for changing my life and giving me the confidence to believe in myself. I know that you regretted not having had the time to get a good education. Nobody valued that for you. I make tennis a top priority, but I know now that I should try to do even better in school as well. I have the same regret that you do. I learned the value of education the hard way. I couldn't even apply to the school I really wanted to go to because my grades were too low. Last quarter, I tried much harder and almost made honor roll. I am getting somewhere. Thank you for helping me along the way.

From,

Brian

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