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In Tennis, Love Means You're at an Impasse, But in Life Love Means You've Scored, Big-Time!

by John M Shaw

Tennis has been my vocation and avocation for 35 years. The genesis of my tennis career has an interesting twist. I had convulsions as a 1 year-old which was accompanied by high fevers. My recollection was that they used to throw me into tubs of ice. My mom was paranoid even when I was eight years-old that the convulsions would return even though I had not had them since I was two. Consequently, she would not allow me to play little league baseball.

Being a persistent eight year-old, I found an outlet a block from my house even though I did not have permission to leave our yard. It was a property owned by a Renaissance man named Joe Amirato who had a basketball court that was on a tennis court. I made it a point to get there frequently and became an excellent basketball player. While I was shooting baskets, Joe would come out with his friends to play tennis, so I also enjoyed this spectator sport. Two years later, when I was ten, Joe offered to teach me tennis. Little did I know that that moment would set the course of an amazing life – in tennis as a metaphor for life.

Five years later, Joe had me read the autobiography of Yogananda, which was my first venture into the world of subtle energies. Joe was a great role model and father figure and easily the most altruistic person I have ever known.

As my life went forward, I became a very accomplished basketball player and an average tennis player. I received several academic and basketball scholarships to college, but none for tennis until I took a chance trip to Upsala College. My friend Rick asked me to keep him company on a football recruiting trip there during my senior year in high school. When we arrived at Upsala that day I went to the basketball coaches' office to pass time. When I entered the office I met a man who I thought was basketball coach Rich Adabato, but who was actually the tennis coach, Charlie Lundgren. My error occurred because they had recently switched offices, but the signs had not been changed.

I told him I was looking for the basketball coach and he said, "What is a little shit like you doing playing basketball?" I was insulted. He then asked me if I played tennis and when I said yes he invited me to practice so he could evaluate me. After I showed him my tennis game, he told me I had excellent talent, but was not good enough at this time to make the top nine players and thus get a scholarship. He did dangle a carrot in front of me, though, when he told me to come up to college a month before classes started and he would instruct me three hours a day. If I made

the top nine during tryouts, he would give me a full tennis scholarship. He told me he thought I could do it.

This moment was another life-changer because I accepted his challenge and forwent my other scholarships even though my family was very poor. I went through a tryout of seventy players and made the top nine for my scholarship. In two years I became the number one player on the team, but more importantly, [coach Lundgren] invited me to learn how to instruct at his summer tennis camp when I was 19. In four years I was directing the camp. I developed my powers of observation and intuition to the point that I was able to pick out a beginner seven year-old named Jon, whom I spotted from fourteen courts away, and I told my coach that Jon would be my first national champion. Three years later he won the twelve and under nationals.

Teaching whole-person tennis

I share the above because it shows how our energies attract whatever we need to come to us – at the right time. To do this, we hold an image in our mind with positive emotion in the present tense.

I have conveyed this energy principle to all the 3,000 junior players I have taught since 1974. Charlie turned out to be another father figure who taught me the value of a positive energy and a single-mindedness to achieve a goal. In later years, I went on to coach fifteen national junior tennis champions, 1,000 college scholarshiped players and junior players with international rankings – and all of this was because my mom would not let me play little league baseball! The moral of the story: embrace adversity and the power of the universe and your higher self will lead you on the right path.

As you walk into the entrance of Wimbledon there is a line from the poem if by Rudyard Kipling which says, "If you can meet with triumph and disaster and treat those two imposters just the same" (ending with ...Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!) This is the message I convey on the tennis court every day to my students.

I also tell them to hit with their heart, and their body will follow when they hit a ball. This is similar to Bruce Lipton's book, "Biology of Belief," which tells us that we can create anything if we believe it at the cellular level.

Another thing I stress is that the world steps aside for the people who know where they are going. I make my students realize that if you do a small job well on a continual basis it will manifest as a big job done well.

I provoke them to think by making them analyze strategy situations, compare and contrast things, make observations, and become adept at learning how to qualify their statements.

I show them that losing is highly beneficial if you keep your cool and analyze your mistakes and go forward by embracing them for improvement.

I emphasize that being a professional in anything means you come and give your best no matter what the circumstances

I teach them to instill nutritional and exercise routines which raise the vibration of the body. They learn the value of hydrating properly and using the photons of the sun to elevate themselves energetically.

I help them understand – to a very deep level of awareness – that they can create their own reality every moment by using positive imagery through the third eye. (Joe Amirato taught me this at age ten.) An example would be closing your eyes and imagining a white light going into the third eye portal between the eyes. Sunlight on the eyes hits the pineal gland, which promotes the intuitive and healing. Put an image of what you want in that third eye portal between your eyes like having a new car. Immerse yourself in the joy of driving it in the present. You can also use the imagery right before sleep. During REM sleep the brain waves slow down, learning is accelerated and the fertile subconscious is accessed. When I was twelve, I imagined myself hitting a perfect topspin serve every night before sleep. I taught myself that serve in three nights.

I help them realize that being grateful is a great source of wealth and the best thing you can do is be of service to others. For example, when I was finishing my last exam, I had an image of a young student of mine accepting the national championship trophy with me at his side and thousands in the stands watching. Prior to that I envisioned how he created and won the final point of the match and gave me a nod while I watched in the VIP box, knowing that that nod encompassed all we had gone through in three years to get there. Another example was when I was confined to a wheel chair, not having slept for months, riddled with disease and images of dirt being thrown on me in the grave. I replaced that image with me playing tennis and golf and sprinting with my muscles fully intact. As it turns out, both of these images became my reality. My student won the nationals in three years and my health was restored enough in six months so that I was back on the court teaching tennis at a moderate level. Now, at 52 years old, a little over two years since my period of worst health, I feel the best that I have ever felt in my life. I am moving on the tennis court like I did in my twenties. Seeing is believing – as long it is done in the present tense and with positive emotion so thick it could be cut like a knife. As to how this might be explained, I feel this emotional tag has a direct correlation to quantum energy.

I teach a thinking man's game of tennis. My players learn to shape the ball (curving the ball high, low, deep, short and to the corners, with topspin or backspin) so they can expose weaknesses of their opponents. The game I teach is chess on the run. I went back 100 years and studied every champion I could find. The common denominator in all of them is that they have more spin than their opponents and more emotional control when things go against them.

I had the benefit of practicing my emotional control when I almost died two years ago from a combination of several diseases. I had not slept for three months straight, and weighed less than 100 pounds when my normal weight is 145 pounds. When I was coming out of my illness, I had no income for three years yet I never panicked. I extended my healing strategies to people who were ill at the dental clinic in Marble Falls, Texas, and was grateful for my health and the knowledge gained. People started paying me on their own for my advice. The same thing happened when I was 19. I started teaching people tennis in my home town and they just paid me. I have always done things as a hobby and for love and enjoyment first and the universe has compensated me in many ways.

For self-healing, I imagined myself running and playing tennis even though I was confined to a wheel chair at that time. I embraced the disease as a learning experience, and was grateful for everyone and everything that had a positive influence throughout my life. I held on emotionally until I could use my mind to think my way back to health. In short, it is now two years later and I am on a quest for eternal youth and feel younger every day. Life is a tennis match with all its psychodramas.

Paying it forward: The nurturing attitude of gratitude

Let me share a little concluding story. In 1997 I decided to send a special thank you note to Joe Amirato for all he taught me about life. He died a gruesome death in 2002 from asbestos in the lungs. Chas, a young boy from my hometown whom he had taught, was at Joe's bedside when he died. That day, Joe read Chas the thank you letter I had sent him years earlier, and told Chas how proud he was of me and how happy the letter of thanks had made him. He gave Chas the letter and a tennis racquet.

Five years later, in November of 2007, I gave my first tennis lesson after nearly dying from my several diseases. Chas drove eighty miles for a tennis lesson with me. He related the touching story that Joe had told him about me on his deathbed. It touched me in a profound way. If I can inspire anyone the way Joe has inspired me, I will have lived a great life. That means I do my best in every situation. , That is what it means to be a professional.

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