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How Andre Agassi helped me during my cardiothoracic surgery training

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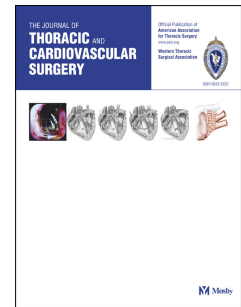
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JTCVS Young Editors Series**What were the most valuable lessons I learned in training?**

Title: How Andre Agassi helped me during my cardiothoracic surgery training

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I have no conflicts of interest.

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Whether they are tennis fans or not, I encourage all my colleagues, friends and residents to read Andre Agassi's highly acclaimed autobiography "Open"¹. It tells the story of the fourth child of an immigrant family from Iran and how he against the odds became one of the greatest tennis players of all time. Andre Agassi's parents had never played tennis in their lives. His father Michael (Emmanuel) Agossian, maintained the clay tennis court near the American Military base before the revolution and watched GI's play this really cool game in their fancy white outfits. Back then he decided that he was going to make sure his children learned this game and became good at it. Andre and his family lived in Las Vegas, not the flashy strip but rather in the poor out skirts. Joining a tennis club was not an option. So, his father built an asphalt tennis court in the back yard. He purchased hundreds of used tennis balls from the local country club and made sure Andre hit one thousand balls every single day even when it was hundred degrees outside. His son asked him once "Why one thousand?" He replied "Because if you hit thousand balls every day, in three years you will have hit one million balls and nobody can beat a man who has hit one million balls!" And he was right. Andre Agassi became the first male tennis player to win all four Grand Slam tournament on three different surfaces. He won the olympic gold medal in Atlanta in 1996 and led team USA to 3 Davis Cup championships. To this day, he is considered by many tennis gurus and other professional players to have the best forehand and be the best returner of all time ¹.

Now, back to cardiothoracic surgery; What did I learn from Andre Agassi that helped me during my training and made me a better person, doctor and surgeon ? After all, if surgery is tennis, then cardiac surgery is the Wimbledon , and we all aspire to be win the cup. First, I learned that practice makes perfect and the best way to practice is simulation. Second, I need to study my opponent. Third, I need to build a reliable team. Fourth, I need to take care of myself so I can stay healthy. Fifth, I need to mentally prepare myself for the game and all possible outcomes before the game. And last but not least, I need to have a strong social support network.

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