



It doesn't matter whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game.

Yeah, you never bought into that, either, did you? If it's all about playing and not about winning, then why have umpires, referees, and judges? Why keep score? And what's the use of fans frothing at the mouth over victory?

More precisely, perhaps, it's not about winning or losing but about being gracious either way – an attitude personified in the new book “On the Line” by Serena Williams (with Daniel Paisner). Three years old. That's how old Serena Williams thinks she might've been when she first picked up a tennis racquet that was almost bigger than she was. Williams says that her father – a self-taught tennis visionary who knew talented players could make big bucks – made slamming a ball seem like fun, which made all the Williams girls want to make a big racquet.

At first, tennis lessons were only held a few days a week at a run-down court near the Williams' California home. After it became obvious that the girls had aptitude and talent, those lessons were expanded to once or even twice a day, every day.

Growing up, Williams says she was a “princess”. As the youngest child, her four sisters doted on her and gave her everything she wanted, including trophies, clothing, and money. They were a close family -Williams says that, for instance, because of lack of bedroom space, she rotated bed-sharing with each of her sisters - and they were one another's biggest supporters.

While early focus was on Venus and the keen talent she exhibited (even though Serena was up-and-coming), Williams says that her father was always quick to point out that there were two future champions in the family: the daughter who was getting lots of press and attention within the circuit... and the baby of the family, was just as hungry for a win.

In this book, Serena Williams writes about racism in a sport that was once thought to be only for rich white folks. She gives readers a hint about her romantic life and a man whose name she won't say aloud. She writes about her oldest sister, whom Williams misses terribly. She explains

## Book review: “On the Line” by Serena Williams with Daniel Pais

Written by Terri Schlichenmeyer

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what it’s like to know that your fiercest rival in the match is also the person who went to bat for you all your life. And she writes about the game she lives, loves, and almost gave up.

“On the Line” is a delightful book filled with respect, humor, humility, and a sprinkling of well-deserved bragging. For me, the surprise here (which may not surprise major tennis fans) is the closeness that author Serena Williams feels for her biggest rival and sister, Venus. Watch them go head-to-head on the court, teeth gritted, and you’d think they’re bitter enemies. It’s nice to read otherwise.

If you’re looking for a to-be-continued biography that isn’t loaded with sex, drugs, and four-letter words, this is the one to find. For tennis fans and non-fans alike, “On the Line” is a big winner.

“On the Line” by Serena Williams with Daniel Paisner | c.2009, Grand Central Publishing | \$26.99 / \$32.99 Canada | 257 pages