

## A Little Fear Is A Good Thing

Mary was set to play her national tournament in the 12s age division. We woke up early to get some practice time in and headed to her site. Her first opponent, Claire was about eight inches shorter than Mary. She's a retriever, get a lot of balls back; you know like a ball machine, she keeps spitting them out to the other side. Mary walked with calmness and played her first set flawlessly. She did everything right; focused, hitting the right shots at the right time, bent her knees, hit with topspin, kept the ball deep, and driving the daylights out of the ball. Even though she wears an 11-1/2 men's shoe, she was quite agile on the court. Footwork is something we are constantly working on. Took her to buy some shoes, and I had to purchase a men's 12 shoe! Mary was literally powering her opponent off the court, definitely a slugger. Mary loves to hit a ball with pace. Playing older kids has its advantages, she can hit with the best of them. Mary prevailed 6-1. Now the second set, for some reason from my vantage point, she appeared angry; what about, only she and God know. I'm perplexed because she just won the first set. All Mary had to do was play her second set like the first. Hey, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. She loss the first game, then the second game and the third. Her deficit kept amounting. In her frustration, she hit a ball to the back of the fence and the freaking ball went over the fence! Now guess who else is angry at this point. Yes, yes, I know, anger is defined as insane. Well, I was conscious of my insanity, Mary was not! She was spraying balls all over the place, hitting flat instead of with topspin, not bending her knees, just not doing what she was suppose to do, most importantly, she was no longer focus and it was quite obvious. As the match progressed, her anger turned to concern, a look of terror was revealed like a conspicuous pimple on the tip of her nose. I could see reality was setting in like Hurricane Katrina, "Oh my gosh! I'm going to lose!" Well she did 1-6. They played a 10 point tiebreak in lieu of a third set. I actually thought when I saw her finally start hitting with topspin, she would prevail, well, she didn't. Mary loss the tiebreak 10-4 and ultimately the match. We left the tournament site to get something to eat. On the way to the restaurant I said, "Get out. You have all this anger bent up inside you, you need to relieve it, so you can jog to the restaurant. You have three hours before your next match. I told her, "I'm not raising no quitter. You will go out and compete or you will NOT compete in tournaments. Mary, you need to read my blogs, that's going to be part of your homework now. What were you possibly angry about anyway? You won the first set decisively. Your anger placed you at an extreme disadvantage. Why hand someone the match? Do you think you were placed in this tournament just for the heck of it? It's about development; it's about going out there and competing. It's about trying your best. It's not the loss I find upsetting, it's the fact you gave up. I give you and your sister 110%, 365 days out of the year. I expect you to give me the same. In fact your failure to do so is not an option. If you don't, I'm going to come down on you like a ton of bricks. I guarantee you your fear of seeing me at the end of your match will be far greater than your fear of losing the match. I will hold you accountable for your actions. By this time, Mary is saying, "Yes, Mam, yes Mam." It's amazing how humble she becomes when she knows I'm at a point of conscious insanity. She gets out to jog or shall I say run. She's sprinting like Jesse Owens. A little fear is a great thing! We arrived at the restaurant and she ordered her food. I didn't sit with her. She needed time to reflect on what she did and what she would do to rectify the situation for her second match. We left and I told her to get out and jog again. She

complied. Tommy said, "Yvonne, you think that's a good idea right before the match? She just jogged about a mile-and-a-half before she ate." I responded, "She'll be alright, she needs to understand this is part of the consequences for not handling her business. She has ample time to rest up." Tommy chuckled and shook his head. I told her to get in and upon our arrival to the match she did not sit with us. She sat a distance away and went out with Tommy to hit some balls to warm up for her match. Tommy said, "Yvonne she's going to win this match. I tell you she's going to be a different kid out there." I said, "We'll see. It ain't over until the fat lady sing." Tommy chuckled again and said, "Well, she definitely understands she cannot repeat what she did in the earlier match." I smiled and said, "She better; only time will tell and we're about to find out." Mary's opponent was Kelsie who in my opinion is an incredibly good tennis player. She hits the ball, has a big serve and didn't have netitist which is a fear of coming to the net. Thank goodness Mary play people like her, so she was prepared to hit a ball with pace. In fact this is Mary's preferred game. The million dollar question was did she listen to what I said? Is the fear of me greater than losing the match? In the first set it was 1-1, Kelsie 2-1, 2-2, Kelsie 3-2, 3-3, Kelsie 4-3, Kelsie 5-3 and she won the first set 6-3. Guess what? Mary didn't hit a ball to the back of the fence, and was the epitome of calmness. Mary's serve was off. She wasn't getting her first serve in. However, she was focused and had an inner confidence she could do better. I sat there observing, rarely applauding, just observing, watching her every move and she knew it. It was a good set. A little fear is a magnificent! In the second set it was Kelsie 1-0, Kelsie 2-1, 2-2, Kelsie 3-2, 3-3, Kelsie 4-3, Kelsie 5-3. Then Mary started getting her groove on, you could see she was extremely focus, intense, hitting the ball with pace and running down everything. She was making her first serve and she won the game, score 4-5, 5-5, Kelsie 6-5, 6-6 and Mary won the tiebreak 7-4 and ultimately the set. Kelsie is now getting upset and is double faulting. She was blasting bazookas at Mary but Mary returned them. Kelsie's forehand was a killer, but Mary returned those with the same intensity. They were slugging it out like Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali, what a fight again! Mary won the tiebreak 10-6 and ultimately the match. She walked off the court smiling with a look of triumph. She was elated with her exemplary effort, completely proud of prevailing in this awesome battle. She maintained her composure even in defeat. I asked her, "Mary what was the deciding factor?" She said, "Mommy I didn't want to be in anymore trouble, and I didn't want to run anymore either. You told me if I didn't try my best I would have to run even further." I replied, "You're absolutely right! Congratulations on her success." She replied with a hug, "Thank you Mommy!" Of course I reciprocated with a hug and said, "Thank you Mary, job well done. Kelsie is a very good player even if you had loss; I would have been proud of your effort because you went out and competed." Well, it appears a little fear is stupendous thing!

Written by: Yvonne Profit, February 19, 2010