

The Haves vs The Have Nots In Tennis

By Yvonne Profit

What do you think it takes to make a champion? Do you think it's money? If so, why is it the majority of the world's top tennis players are non-Americans and America is one of the richest countries in the world? Do you think the best coaches will turn your junior tennis player into a world champion? What about all the kids going to IMG Bolleterri and a host of other tennis academies around the world? Do you think all these kids will make it into the pro ranks? Do you think the junior player whose family is without the financial means is more determined to succeed than the affluent junior player? Take a child living in the most affluent country in the world, but sleeps every night in a RV. Our home is on wheels, my children still have to do homework, practice, stretch, prepare mentally for tournaments and in Elizabeth's case deal with a chronic illness, Juvenile Diabetes Type I. I think the child living in the RV will have a greater urgency to do their best because their life in their eyes is more challenging. Elizabeth told me at the Copperbowl tournament. "Mommy I'm going to keep winning so I can keep taking baths!" You are relegated to take showers and I keep a timer on, because the RV has a 40 gallon tank! Elizabeth made it to the quarterfinals in the 18s national tournament.

Now the Haves go to a awesome house secured to the ground in a beautiful secure neighborhood. Their water is retrieved from an unlimited water source rather than a 40 gallon water tank. He/she sleeps in a warm bed at night probably larger than the 32 ft. RV I drive. Guess who is going to be more determined? Guess who is going to be hungrier? Who would you rather be the Have or the Have Not? If it was only money that

determined an athlete's success all the wealthy kids would excel in their chosen sport.

I was in a conversation several years ago with a fellow alumni of the University of Michigan. His son currently plays in the NFL and signed a \$40 million contract. He also played professional football. He has a daughter about a year younger than Mary. I told him it takes years to develop the physical ability and mindset to do well in the sport of tennis. He went on to say his daughter who has never played tennis in her entire life at the age of 8 would be able to beat my daughters one day. I chuckled and said, "I think not." He stated, "I don't care if it takes \$100,000 a year to train her. She will one day beat your girls!" I chuckled again and said, "I think it will take far more than \$100,000, because my daughters at 9 and 11 have 7 and 9 court years experience in tennis and your daughter doesn't have any. In order for your daughter to compete at this level she would have to play tennis seven days a week, several hours a day to catch up with the girls. In essence, she's too soft, life is too pampered. It sounds to me you want this more than her and she is the one that will have to train and make the sacrifices to learn this sport. Your money will not give her heart. Your money will not give her sheer determination, your money will not give her grit and your money will not give her that never give up mentality. Your wealth has coddled, spoiled and given her every material possession her heart desires." In my head I'm saying she's probably a little spoiled brat too! I continued, "Now you want her to work hard like a race horse? The value system you instilled in her is to do nothing and you will reward her because you are financially able to do so. Now you are

going to tell her you want her to train hard and long so she can one day beat my daughters. I think not. Now I will tell my daughters about this conversation, and your desire to have your daughter prevail on the tennis court against my daughters. The result will be they will decimate your daughter on the tennis court. Your daughter's fragile ego will be destroyed because she will not be able to handle the pressure. Your daughter isn't use to adversity so she will crack like an egg depending on daddy to make daddy's little girl's world perfect again." There was a deafening silence over the telephone. He thought about this, because he grew up on the East side of Detroit.