

Could you ever possibly forgive me Andre

Hearsay & Heresy

By J.J. Wylle
Staff Opinion Writer

Having moved here in 1985, I have lived in Las Vegas long enough to be considered a near-native. After all, I pre-date the Mirage, the Luxor, and the MGM Grand. In fact, I remember when what is now Bally's was the MGM Grand and you could drive down Fremont Street to get to the Union Plaza; when Summerlin was just a gleam in some developer's eye and Tonopah Hall was the only dorm on campus.

And so, being a Las Vegan by relative seniority, I have to confess to what may be an unpardonable sin: it is only now, late in my native-hood (my nativity?) that I have finally become a fan of our hometown boy, the tennis hero Andre Agassi.

In my youth, I harbored fleeting dreams of tennis-stardom, dreams that were quickly smashed by my dismal performances in junior-novice tournaments. I had neither the nature nor the nurturing that makes a professional tennis player. Nowadays,

what with Martina Hingis and the Williams sisters burning up the tour, it seems tennis players are all but genetically-engineered.

When Andre Agassi began to make waves on the tennis circuit in the very late eighties, I didn't pay much attention. It wasn't until his appearance in the final of the US Open in 1990, which he lost to Pete Sampras after eliminating the legendary Boris Becker in the previous round, that I began to take a longer and closer look. And, I can tell you now, with a shamed face, that I didn't like I saw.

Las Vegas already has a problem in the style-versus-substance category, and Andre seemed only to feed the stereotype by emphasizing flash over fire with that bad-boy attitude and wild hair. That thousands of young female tennis fans worshipped Andre only fanned the flames of my dislike (what I wouldn't have given for just an iota of similar attention!

When sportscasters and commentators began to build up the Sampras-versus-Agassi rivalry as one that would revisit the epic grandeur of the McEnroe-Borg days, I scoffed and secretly rooted for Pete, whose workmanlike demeanor I found more appetizing. Imagine that: a self-styled iconoclast like me opting for the more conservative personality. Go figure.

When Andre went into a minor slump in 1993 (after an injury that would later require surgery), it seemed a vindication of my low opinion of our hometown hero. "See," I would opine, "he doesn't have what it takes to stay on top!" Never mind the fact that a mere mortal like me, whose aces are about half the speed of Andre's second serves, would have precious little idea of what it takes to even make to the world's top ten, let alone stay there.

But the 1994 and 1995 tennis seasons were good ones for Andre, and I had to watch and seethe as he went from victory to victory. Yet never did I waver from the opinion that this Las Vegan was anything more than a flash in the pan. Sick, wasn't I?

And it was in 1994 that Andre accomplished the near-Herculean

task of taking out five seeded players to become the first unseeded US Open champion since 1966. He would end the year as the second-ranked tennis player in world, having defeated (at least once) every other top-ten player during the course of the tour, and what Andre-esque moment would I keep locked in my memory? It's that shameless bit of ham-acting he did after winning match-point at the US Open, when he tossed his racquet, dropped to his knees, and, holding out his arms to his now-wife Brooke, mouthed the words, "Oh, my God, I don't believe it!" I know I didn't want to believe it, either, but talk about not giving a guy a break: he had just won a Grand Slam, after all.

When the tabloids and the fans began to follow the Camelot-esque romance of Brooke and Andre, I held my nose up in disdain. When Andre bottomed out in 1997, finishing out of the world's top-hundred for the first time in a decade, I nodded knowingly. "Andre's too busy being a celebrity to concentrate on tennis," I would say, parroting the opinions of tennis-commentators across the globe (no one likes a critic, and now you know why.)

But it's 1998 now, and Andre is back. And I am forced to admit, after having watched him play in a challenger tournament (the bush-league of tennis) held right here on the UNLV campus, that Andre's talent, whatever ups and downs his career has weathered, is awesome to behold. No one hits a flatter ball, and Andre is credited with perfecting the technique of taking high-balls out of the air with a punishing groundstroke rather than a smash, all without losing an ounce of power. It's a shot I'm able to hit about one-percent of the time on a good day.

Yes, Andre is back, playing lean and mean, with two titles already this year and impressive runs at the Australian Open and the Lipton Championships, taking out Pete Sampras, Michael Chang, and Patrick Rafter along the way. And he took his loss to Marcelo Rios at the Lipton with nary a tantrum. He was simply outplayed, but he never gave up.

And it's time I gave up my jealous bias against a man who represents my hometown in the best way possible: by proving his mettle on the court. The honeymoon of my prejudice is over: Andre has come back to work.

People should bear the consequences of their actions

Consider This

By Shamila Nduriri
Staff Opinion Writer

There is something that has been on my mind ever since I became familiar with the legal system in this country. It seems as if more and more people are getting off lightly for their crimes because of 'problems' that they have. A good example is Mary Kay Le Toumeau. She got off lightly the first time around for having a sexual relationship with a 13 year old student because she claimed to suffer from some sort of disability that made her act in an unacceptable manner.

Now, I can understand that maybe the legal system was trying to give an otherwise decent woman a break, and maybe there are not enough prisons to hold every criminal, but nonetheless, the result of this magnanimity was outrageous. As

soon as she was released, what did Mary Kay do? You know: she went straight to her teenage boyfriend and is now pregnant with their second child, despite the fact that as part of her release deal she was not allowed near him.

Call me crazy, but this is just ludicrous! If she was known to have a disorder that made her behave in an erratic manner, then why did they trust her to keep her promise that she would not see the boy again? If you don't want to put her in prison, then I say put her in a home where someone can take care of her; just so long as she is not running around the streets.

Another case currently being debated concerns the two young boys

in Jonesboro, Arkansas who gunned down their classmates in cold blood. While I don't think that they should lower the age of the death penalty so that these two boys can get what some consider their just punishment, I do think that they should be tried as adults so they don't get out of juvenile prison as soon as they turn eighteen. I heard that one of them intends to blame his actions on the fact that he has been abused. I sympathize with the boy, and I wouldn't wish any kind of abuse on anyone whatever the circumstances. However, while being a victim of abuse may be a good reason for acting in such an anti-social and violent manner, it is not an excuse nor a justification for gunning

down one's classmates in cold blood. All I can say is that I hope that they don't get off easy because of this. If they do, it will just reinforce the trend in our culture of avoiding responsibility for one's actions.

It seems as if more and more people are using the fact that they were abused, poor, or a host of other things as excuses for their actions. I agree that these "issues" are very real for their victims, but come on, let's get real. How long is this going to last? Pretty soon, there will be excuses for everything, and what kind of a society are we going to have then? If we are going to claim that we cannot be held responsible for actions like murder or theft then we should similarly not be

held responsible for our good actions. Think about it. It makes sense.

If you excuse me for murdering my neighbor because I was beat up so bad by my husband that I just had to lash out at someone, that means you don't value my neighbor's life too much. After all, just because I was abused by my husband doesn't make it any less wrong for me to murder. This information only provides an understanding of why I did it, it does not justify my doing it.

Bottom line is that we need to start realizing that every action has a consequence and that having a good explanation for our actions does not automatically exempt us from the consequences.

MUSINGS: No men's sport would get a coach with such a bad record

ment says it is, then why aren't we getting a proven winning coach?


Hopefully, this decision was made because of some hidden reason. Maybe Miller is known for her emphasis on education for her players. Maybe her teams were struck with injuries. Maybe there's a hidden factor that the public doesn't see. After all, Bill Bayno was not the public's first choice to take over the men's program and that has worked out well. Then again, Bayno didn't have a losing record, either.

Unfortunately, this hiring comes at a time when women's sports at UNLV really needed a positive boost, not a negative one. The volleyball team is looking like it's on the road to success. Our track coach, Karen Dennis, was named to coach the U.S. Olympic team in 2000. Once again, the softball team is a WAC contender. The swim team had a successful year and the tennis team has withstood some big personnel losses to remain strong. But it's all overshadowed by this new controversy.

It appears that, once again, the UNLV athletic department has shown its apathy towards the university's

female athletes. Consider this; if the football team struggles again this year and Jeff Horton were to lose his job, would UNLV hire a new coach who had a losing record at a much smaller school? I guarantee you that they would not. Would we hire the best coach or the best coach who happened to be a minority? Surely not. So why should the women's sports not be treated the same way? Is it because nobody cares about the women's sports and they don't raise enough money for the school? Does the athletic department think that the public will be impressed with their 'progressive' hiring practices? Did the Black Coaches Association pressure the school into making the hire? Why? Why? Why?

Maybe Miller will turn her record around and win a national championship here. Maybe she won't. But her hiring seems to expose some sort of double standard between the men's and women's teams. Do we expect our men's teams to win and the women to just show up and fill out the numbers on a piece of paper? Unfortunately, based on this decision, that seems to be the case.



You've mastered
online chatrooms.
Now let's talk

online banking

You spend your life online, why not bank while you're there?

- Check balances
- Track credit cards
- Pay bills
- Transfer money

The Wells Fargo UNLV Branch Center
And you didn't think banking could ever be fun.

© 1998 Wells Fargo Member FDIC

UNLV Branch Center
4626 S. Maryland Pkwy
(702) 739-5843

Across from the
Student Union, between
Einstein Bros.® Bagels
and Starbucks®

www.wellsfargo.com