

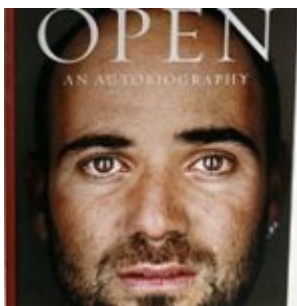
Agassi aces account of his life with 'Open'

By Kathryn Reed

Apparently Andre Agassi didn't get the message that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.

His autobiography is all about life in Las Vegas, the hazards of growing up under the tyranny of a father who makes the phrase "Little League parent" seem like a compliment, the struggles of losing ones hair, life on the tennis circuit, and love.

As a tennis fan and player who followed Agassi's career through the years, reading his book "Open" added a depth to this champion's life that I didn't know about.



I was living in Las Vegas when he played in the 1995 Davis Cup match against Sweden. Reading about what he was going through at that time helped explain the arrogance he exhibited on the court and in the pressroom.

Reading about all the people who wanted to look like him, especially during his longhair days, made me smile. It brought back memories of the guy at my old tennis club who was a dead ringer for Agassi. And Agassi's comments about Michael Chang rang true based on the little I saw of him at the tennis club we both belonged to.

The book also delves into Agassi's insights about other players on the tour – notably his rival Pete Sampras.

Unfortunately when the book came out in 2009 most of the reviews latched on to the revelation Agassi had used crystal

meth. Yes, it was part of his life. Yes, he wrote about it. But it's such a small part of the book and his life that it taints the bigger picture.

One must remember that this illegal drug isn't a performance enhancer – quite the opposite. He doesn't glorify the use. He just acknowledges the depths of despair his life had spiraled to and what it took to get straight.

What I was left with after reading the nearly 400-page hardback book is how normal Agassi seems after the turmoil he went through to get to the world stage. When he first hooked up with Stefanie (that's what she prefers to be called) Graf, I thought it odd. But in reading the book it seems so natural and perhaps a bit fated.

Besides enduring a childhood that was filled with more time spent opposing a ball machine than playing with friends, Agassi dropped out of school. For a man who did not graduate from high school, he has committed himself through his namesake academy to provide an education for those less fortunate.

“Open” is just that – an open account of the life of Andre Agassi until he retired from the tour.

Tennis fans won't be disappointed.