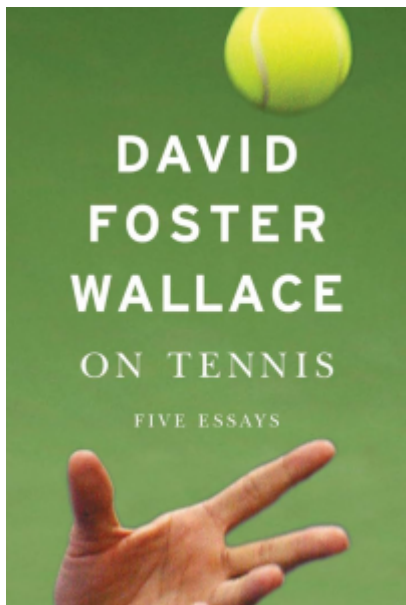


Collection of tennis essays bring life to the sport

By Kathryn Reed

What would David Foster Wallace have to say about the state of tennis today? What nuances would he bring to life? How would he dissect icons Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal, who are still the pillars of men's tennis, who just last weekend battled it out in the final at the Miami Open?

We'll never know. Wallace took his own life in 2008 at the age of 46.



I just finished reading Wallace's "On Tennis: Five Essays" (2014 Hatchett Book Group). You don't have to be a tennis player to appreciate these five works.

Wallace's writing is delightfully descriptive, bringing the reader into the sport and beyond in ways that reading the sports pages seldom is able to do. He is a bit wonky, as well as insightful. His words are playful and purposeful.

Having played junior tennis at a fairly high level, Wallace isn't some interloper. He understands the mental and physical fortitude needed to play this sport. And, yet, he is humbled as well as he let's loose in "Federer Both Flesh and Not."

It's that love of the game that allows him to create stories almost out of nothing and turn them into masterfully written works of art.

In "How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart" he delves into how our sports heroes are mortal and how that can be a disappointing revelation.

These essays could all stand on their own – and have been previously published. Together, though, they are an in depth walk through the world of tennis.

Anyone who likes tennis will devour these essays. Anyone who likes sport will relate on some level. Anyone who appreciates fantastic writing will undoubtedly enjoy this collection.