

Aztec Tennis Reporter

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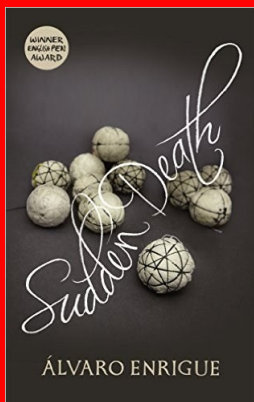
SERVING THE SAN DIEGO STATE TENNIS COMMUNITY SINCE 1998

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BOOKS

Tennis Novel's Aztec Tragedy

Alvaro Enrique's *Sudden Death* is a novel that gorges on tennis played in an ancient, violent manner. The major



match, fought in Rome, pits the Italian painter Caravaggio against the Spanish poet Francisco de Quevedo. An Amazon reviewer said "the changing fortunes of the game -- think blood sports rather than Wimbledon -- thread through the entire book, but only as a spine to which numerous other ideas may be attached."

SPHERES: To die on court?

The ball," said reviewer Roger Brunyate, is "stuffed with the hair of Anne Boleyn, cut off before her death and given as fee to her French executioner."

"The story of how it got into Caravaggio's hands," Brunyate wrote, involves "two

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Amid Struggles, Aztecs Score 5 Upsets

In a season of difficult matches, the 2016 Aztec men and women managed to pull off five notable victories.

The Aztec men surprised No. 58 Cal Poly (4-2), No. 70 Penn (5-2), No. 57 Utah State (4-3), and No. 64 New Mexico (4-3).

The men also defeated UC Riverside (6-1), St Mary's (4-0), Arizona (4-3), Fresno State (4-3), Nevada (4-0), and Air Force twice (4-1 and 4-0).

The Aztec women stunned No 48 Minnesota (5-2), and also defeated UC Riverside (5-1), UC Davis (4-3), UC Irvine (6-1), Sacramento State (4-3), and Cal Poly (5-2).

In the Mountain West tournament, the Aztec women defeated Nevada (4-3). The Az-



AZTEC COMPETITORS: Junior Milen Ianaiev, above, and senior Tami Nguyen, 50th in early 2016 ITA/NCAA singles rankings.



tec men defeated Air Force (4-0). In the finals, UNLV's men defeated Boise State, 4-3 and, UNLV's women beat Fresno State, 4-2.

Both Aztec teams finished the season outside the Oracle ITA Division One rankings of the top 75 college teams in the United States.



Old Globe Photos: Jim Cox

CASTING CALL: Actors in Old Globe's *The Last Match*, from left Troian Bellisario as Mallory, Patrick Adams as Tim, Alex Mickiewicz as Sergei, Natalia Payne as Galina. Story: Page 4

Australian TV Mystery: Tennis Obsession as a Murder Motive?



Lawson to Barrows: "How could tennis matter so much!" Burrows to Lawson: "Because tennis is everything!"

Near the end of the Aussie *Game, Set, Murder*, an episode of the popular Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries, Terence Lawson confronts his ex-lover and mixed doubles partner

Constance Barrows, a rising Aussie star, had spurned Lawson to marry a

rich man who could finance her tennis career. She has just confessed to killing a woman who threatened to reveal she had borne Lawson's child.

Lawson: "You killed Belinda, because she knew about our baby! And then you gave the baby up without even telling me!"

Burrows: "If I told you, you'd want me to keep it. You'd want me to get married, settle down, I didn't want any of that!"

Lawson: "But we were in love!"

Burrows: "I loved playing tennis with you, you used to be good."

Lawson: "How could tennis matter this

much?"

Burrows: "Because tennis is everything. The only thing that ever mattered. The only thing I loved. And if I hadn't been so stupid and wound up pregnant, I could have been champion of the world!"

So, with that goal, Constance found murder justifiable! — **J.M.**

Mixing History and Fantasy, Novelist Fashions Tennis as a Duel Sport

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Popes, a Genoese banker, and a Milanese saint -- and along the way the history of the Council of Trent and the Counter-Reformation that ended the Renaissance, launched the Baroque, and gave the Inquisition its license to torture and kill."

How and why did the author, who does not play tennis, choose tennis as a "spine" for his story?

Enrigues explained to a *New York Times* interviewer: "My children play tennis. So I have seen 9-year-old games of tennis. But no, I am an aficionado of 16th- and 17th-century tennis, which is what the characters are playing — *pal-lacorda* (or "real ten-



Author



Painter

nis"), and we really don't have a very good idea of how it was played, which gave me room to invent the rules."

A *Los Angeles Times* review said "*Sudden Death* shows us that games are never merely games, because no game is played without consequences — some of which then permanently cloud our ability to look back and understand the procession of bodies that enable our play, our culture."

That "procession of bodies" involves the Aztec empire's destruction by Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador. As a result, Author Enrique, a

Mexican, has found a provocative way to use tennis to remind us of the tragedy that befell the Aztec people when confronted and defeated by their Spanish invaders — **John Martin**

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Aztec Tennis Reporter is a newsletter created in 1998 for players, coaches, alumni, and friends of San Diego State tennis. Neither the university nor its athletic department is responsible for its content. This is the 62nd issue. To comment, or subscribe, email aztectennisreporter@yahoo.com.



John Martin
Editor

Where Are We Now? The Great Search (1922-2016) Continues

ON-CALL COACH: Aztec Christian Groh (2004-07) works for Tommy Haas and Taylor Fritz in key roles when needed. At this year's Australian Open, Fritz, the world's top junior in 2015 and now a top ATP touring pro, described Groh's extraordinary duties to *Aztec Tennis Reporter*.



Taylor Fritz

“When I'm home in San Diego, I'm always working with Christian. I used to train at Carson, but anytime I get the chance, Christian is involved.”
ATR: What does he bring to the relationship?
FRITZ: “Discipline. He makes me very disciplined, makes me work hard and I need someone like that to get me to do all the right things and just act professional, because he's been



Christian Groh

there with Tommy Haas and he knows what it takes.”
 Groh began coaching as an assistant at USD following his Aztec playing days, where he won 45 career matches, ninth among San Diego State men's players. He coached Michael Berrer and Bradley Klahn. In 2012, Haas, once world No.

and beginning a comeback from injuries, asked for help from Groh, a countryman. Groh hails from Crailsheim and lives in San Diego. Haas, born in Hamburg, lives in Los Angeles. Groh holds an MBA, was an academic all-conference player in 2005, 2006, and 2007. On April 12, 2006, he was conference Player of the Week.

KING AMONG KASTLES: Aztec Kelly Nygaard (1993-94) stands at courtside moments before his Washington Kastle teammates won the World Team Tennis Championship last August with a 24-18 victory over the Austin Aces. Nygaard joined the Kastles some years ago and plays a role in the team's highly successful marketing efforts. As an inventor, he created a lighted courtside scoreboard.



As an inventor, he created a lighted courtside scoreboard.

PILOT: Aztec Jim Ault (1988) entered the cockpit and took the controls as general manager of the San Diego Aviators, the World Team Tennis franchise that moved west in 2015 from New York, where it was called the Sportimes. Ault is a highly regarded teaching pro who moved into the business world, and took on a selling role for Technifibre. His Aviator roster includes Taylor Fritz (above).



Tennis on Stage: Trash Talk, Familiar Strokes, and Deserved Respect

Two men face each other across a stage, swapping strokes in sweeping motions that seemed oddly authentic to tennis players as well as the uninitiated members of an audience drawn into their conversation on and off court.



SWEEPING STROKES: Feigned yet oddly believable.

Gaye Upchurch Taylor to dispense with racquets yet hire a Geoff Griffin, the Balboa Park tennis pro (and an Aztec), to tutor the actors into swinging (and serving) in a vividly accurate manner.

“It was definitely a challenge figuring out how to put tennis on

A U.S. Open semifinal tennis match is the central focus of an intense stage play performed in the round at the Old Globe for a month late last winter. *The Last Match*, a world premier, is the work of playwright Anna Ziegler, who seems remarkably aware of life in a sport we all love.

“It was a deep psychological play,” said Jules Boracks, a devoted San Diego theater goer contacted by *ATR*. “It was about what it was like to be older and the young upstart trying to prove himself, and it could have been in any aspect of life. Tennis was a perfect metaphor.”

Boracks knows first hand about tennis, having played many years.

“You’re naked out there. It’s really just you,” he said. “It was brilliantly written.”

Tim, the older, fading champion, feels naked and defiant. Sergei, the younger, sometimes conflicted challenger, talks trash and common sense.

Ziegler said the trash was drawn from “early Djokovic and Serena,” citing Williams’s epic US. Open tirade against a lineswoman.

“I was sort of struggling to find the right theme,” Ziegler told *ATR*. “I knew it was going to be about a player on the verge of retirement.”

Inspired in part by Andy Roddick’s retirement, Ziegler also drew on the birth of her child “That changed the way I was looking at the play. and what I wanted it to be about.”

The result is a vision of players on the pro tour that feels remarkably real.

One decisive artistic factor was the decision by director

stage and have it still feel exciting, but not so bogged down in reality that we would be worried,” about the players’ skills and the play’s pace, Upchurch said..

One discovery, she said, was that in real life, “players aren’t hitting as fast as you think they are.” The discovery “helped the rhythm of the play, helped the audience to believe the strokes.”

Another key factor: Playwright Ziegler comes with credentials often missing in dramatists. Growing up in Brooklyn, she attended a high school that had no tennis

team so she played at a club.

Ziegler entered a small number of junior tournaments (winning the Mayor’s Cup one year in doubles) and developed a love of tennis.

“I played pretty seriously as a kid, up until college. That was the end of my tennis career. And then I was just a fan.”

And a not-so-secret admirer of top writers about tennis, calling a David Foster Wallace article on Roger Federer “so beautiful it elevates the sport in a way that it deserves. That was the thing I think I was trying to do in my own way.”



Anna Ziegler
Playwright



FIRST SERVES: An audience is invited to imagine a match.