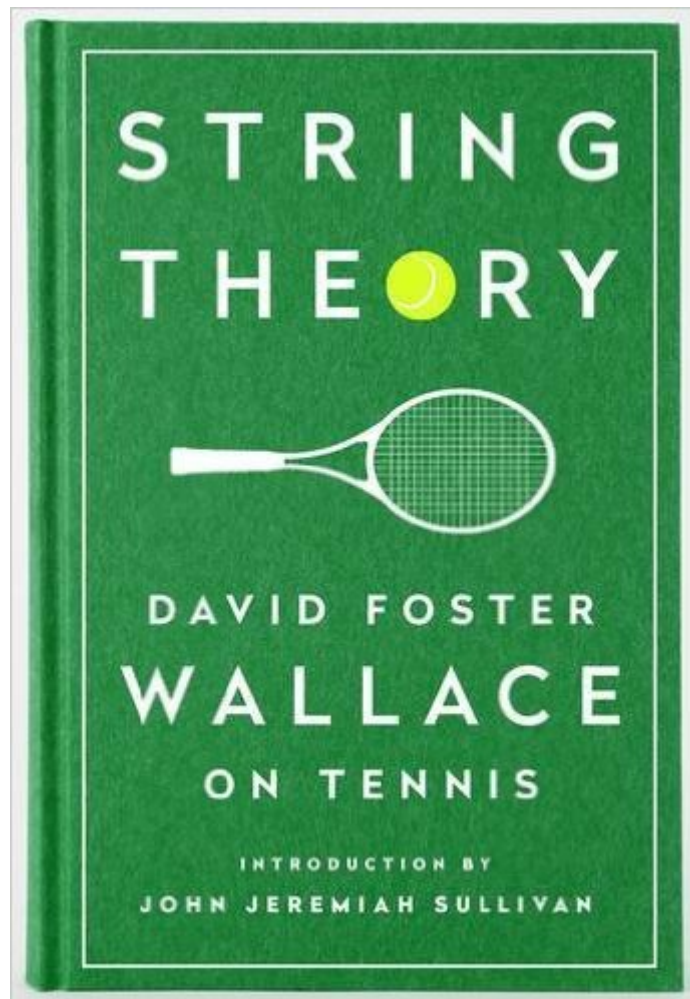


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String Theory: David Foster Wallace On Tennis: A Library Of America Special Publication



Synopsis

An instant classic of American sportswriting—the tennis essays of David Foster Wallace, “the best mind of his generation” (A. O. Scott) and “the best tennis-writer of all time” (New York Times) —Gathered for the first time in a deluxe collector’s edition, here are David Foster Wallace’s legendary writings on tennis, five tour-de-force pieces written with a competitor’s insight and a fan’s obsessive enthusiasm. Wallace brings his dazzling literary magic to the game he loved as he celebrates the other-worldly genius of Roger Federer; offers a wickedly witty dissection of Tracy Austin’s memoir; considers the artistry of Michael Joyce, a supremely disciplined athlete on the threshold of fame; resists the crush of commerce at the U.S. Open; and recalls his own career as a “near-great” junior player. Whiting Award-winning writer John Jeremiah Sullivan provides an introduction.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wallace aficionados long ago embraced these scattered tennis writings, but they are unlikely to have any qualms about revisiting them. For the rest of us? This collection is a memorable introduction to taking flight with the soaring prose of the late DFW — and a convincing argument for what makes tennis intriguing. The essays and profiles in “String Theory” move from Wallace’s small-town Illinois junior-tennis career to his scathing review of the autobiography by former teen prodigy Tracy Austin, which somehow manages to be affectionate even while making obvious her book’s clumsy cliché- and platitude-mongering, to richly observed and reported

stories on a near-great pro, life at the U.S. Open and, most famously, the majesty of Roger Federer at Wimbledon. Like his fiction, or the sliver I know of it, anyway, DFW can't resist footnoting his way through all of these stories. These many digressions are mostly entertaining and interesting as the main text, though the constant back and forth can be taxing for readers. Wallace was whip-smart and, while that mostly means delight for readers, at other times it can leave mere mortals a bit woozy. In the first story, Wallace tells of his childhood and his youth tennis career while reflecting on the mathematical sureties of the sport that fascinated him. The angles and parabolas and allusions to Cramer's Rule (an efficient method of solving for a variable) and Euclid are charming and clever. Wallace describes the 78' X 27' dimensions of a court with its slender rectangles of doubles alleys flanking its whole length—as, looking from above, like a cardboard carton with flaps folded back. • Soon after, Wallace tells of competitive tennis requiring geometric thinking.

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