

ENGLISH

“Conflict is about right and wrong”

Statement of Intention

In my creative writing piece I have tried to create three levels of conflict: intrapersonal, interpersonal and intercultural while communicating the idea of conflict being about right and wrong; is it just and fair to train a youngster to the extent of child abuse? I have linked my piece to the Quiet American by creating an idealistic character, Tom, who believes everything should be “fair”. I have included little phrases from the book such as, ‘good luck’ and ‘cup of tea’ as allusions to the novel. I also included conflict between races, Chinese and Australian, to reinforce the idea of intercultural conflict which exists between Fowler, Pyle and Phuong. I began the story not with the protagonist William but with a news report as this gives background information regarding William and his relationships with others and immediately dives into the interest of readers of sports news. The reactions the young Chinese player gets from his fellow competitors and from the general community provides tension raised by the conflict. I then use dialogue to reinforce the cultural conflict between Tom and Jack, arguing about William’s integrity. William’s flashback to his hometown reveals to the audience a little about his history and upbringing. This would reinforce the integrity of his decision to train so hard. I have changed from past tense to present tense in the flashback in order to bring the audience into the action: they are part of it. I ended the story, with William inviting Tom to go with him get food and tea to signify that, although conflict is often about right and wrong, people can relax and attempt to accept it. It was the competitive nature of tennis that caused such conflict as both sides of the argument wanted the best possible outcome; which is rarely possible. Adolescents may enjoy this piece as the conflict is not on a large scale. Often we may come across this type of conflict on the sports grounds and therefore should be able to relate to the story. The language I chose is suited to educated teenagers with a reasonable reading capability.

“Breaking news / Chinese boy destined for greatness / hasn’t dropped a set in Australian Junior Open. Is it his training or something else? Is it normal?”

On an outside court at Melbourne Park, William felt the searing heat on his already aching body. Ball after ball, William fired his coach’s feeds like a robot practising passages of play, snapping tennis balls cross court and down the line as tennis fans watched in awe. This training session would cause outrage amongst the tennis fans watching him train. He was being pushed to the extent of child abuse, hitting for four hours at a go: hitting thousands of tennis balls and punished by the Chinese coach when he made mistakes. Although the fans saw the sweat dripping from his sodden hair and agony spread across the boy’s face, the crowd understood that this boy was indeed very talented.

When William Zhou walked into the changing room, no one looked at him. The other competitors had their backs turned and continued gossiping about his ability and whether if he was legit.

“Hey Jack, you reckon that Chinese freak is on something?” Tom asked.

“I doubt it; he trains very hard. Have you seen him?” Jack replied.

Tom said, “Yeah, like a monkey in a circus! Imagine if we had to train like that! I would quit tennis!”

“Yeah — so true, but they should cap the amount a junior can train,” Andy chipped in.

“Watch it, fellas! Here he comes!” Jack exclaimed.

“Don’t worry — he wouldn’t understand. He should get rid of his coach; we wouldn’t put up with that in Australia anyway!”

William was standing there. He had come out from the showers and had heard the whole conversation. "I'll see you on centre court tomorrow!" he said in perfect English.

That night, William expressed concern. He asked the coach, "Why is everyone suspicious of me? It really hurts to hear others question me."

The coach scowled at him, "You win today, you win the day before, they are just jealous! Do you want to win or not?"

"I don't know anymore. The public don't like me, the players don't like me. Why should I hit for hours in the morning when my final is in the afternoon? I have practiced enough!" William replied.

"Your choice: but you know nothing!" his coach said.

William looked down at his tennis bag. His parents had invested everything in him. He is back in his hometown in China watching his grandfather in the garden. The old man sees him watching and comes over to bid him farewell. He says, "When you are over there, don't forget us, William. Remember everything we have taught you; you reap what you sow!"

Next afternoon was the final. In the morning, his coach gave him a two hour warm up hit. Jack stopped to watch and said, "Hi William", with a smile. William thought it was a strange thing that neither of them could say, "Good Luck" to the other. But then, the Chinese system did not require luck.

During the game and in the heat of the battle, fierce words were exchanged.

"C'mon — as if you could not make that shot after all that training. Would you get punished?" Tom shot at his opponent at the change of ends but William had been taught to ignore all taunts and concentrate on the game.

"William, don't let down your entire family back in China by losing!" Tom whispered after another change of ends. Once again he ignored Tom. He knew he was only trying to put him off his game.

"William, why don't you sack your coach? We would not put up with that training in Australia. You could have a much easier time if you had an Australian coach."

William could not help himself. His coach had taught him tennis since he was four years old. He would never leave his coach let alone think of sacking him. "In China we respect our elders, especially our teachers," he whispered loudly.

It was a thrilling grand final between but William eventually prevailed in 3 sets, 7-5, 5-7, 6-4. He scarcely had time to get his breath back before he had to attend the inevitable press conference.

William sensed the attention he was receiving and directly linked it to his training routine. He thought about what Jack had said during the match and he pondered what damage the intense training might have done to his growing body. William knew he would have to talk to his coach and discuss not only the short term aspirations but also long term ones; he would not like his career to be cut short by injury.

William could not hesitate much longer he asked his coach, "You know we are going to be flooded with questions about my training in the press conference right?"

"Yes and?" his coach replied.

"Coach, will all this training be helpful in the long run?"

“It seems to be working at the moment.”

“I meant when I am thirty, Will I still be able to play professional tennis?”, William asked, but inside his blood was boiling.

“I don’t know.”

“Coach, could we try cutting down on the amount of training? I’m worried it might affect me in the long run.”

“No! It is either my way or nothing”

“In that case after this interview I will find a new coach. Thank you for the 14 years of coaching but I don’t think this is the way forward.”

His coach stared back into William’s eyes. Never had William spoke like that to his coach.

For an interview with an Australian Junior Open champion, it was surprisingly full of reporters. After a couple of questions relating to how he had found the match, all the questions thereafter were directed at his training.

“How do you cope with such harsh training? Do you have a choice?” a reporter asked.

“Yes! Well it has made me Australian Junior champion. My grandfather once said, you reap what you sow. I guess that has finally come true because of the training.” William replied, standing up for his beliefs.

Then a question was directed at the coach: “Do you believe it is your coaching or William’s raw talent that has helped reach this amazing standard?”

The coach replied, “*Someone who doesn’t know the truth is just thick headed.* I have been coaching William since he was four year old. You have a think about that.”

As William and his coach left the interview room, Tom was there to congratulate him. “Well done William, you deserved it! Let’s say whatever is said on the court stays on the court?” Tom chuckled.

“Thank you. You also played well. Agreed. You want to go and get a cup of tea?” William replied, relaxing.

Tom said happily, “Yes sure.”