

Within each person is a knowing of what you are led to do in any given moment. You have a choice, to do what you know, or to doubt what you know through "Thought." This past weekend is a perfect example of how following this knowing worked out perfectly.

Just a week before the Mercedes-Benz Cup in LA, I knew I was led to start organizing a trip to the event. And while I knew this to be right, each day, "Thoughts" of doubt kept listing the reasons not to go, painting a picture of a not so pleasurable time. But I knew I was led to go.

Last time I had been to UCLA, it looked drab. Yet when I walked into the UCLA tennis center it had been transformed into a facility that complemented the first class image Mercedes-Benz has cultivated over years with their quality and style. I was amazed. It looked like an intimate gala, complete with cafe's, nice shops and VIP tents. The crowd was filled with Hollywood lovers of tennis and the matches the best tennis I have ever seen. You may have read how much I enjoyed the Pacific Life Open last May. This tournament was equally as good, and it's matches far better. This cannot be bought or staged. On some days two opponents collide in exactly the right way. But what was so amazing about this years Mercedes-Benz Cup was the matches were this amazing in the quarters, semi's and finals. And the magic seemed to surround Tommy Haas, the former #2 in the world from Germany. While I had press passes, it did not hurt that I went to the matches with Tommy Haas's former roommate of 10 years at Bollettieri Academy, Alex Bose. Bose is a professional tennis player that is in the process of moving to Las Vegas, and it was interesting to get the inside look at a champions inner circle.

Here I was with Bose when Haas's coach "Red" called Bose down in the semifinals to sit in the coach's box. Bose indicated he had to stay with the group he came with. At this point "Red", said to bring all four of us. In the group was Alex's friends Brittany, David Harris and Mark Kreisberger. David and Marc are beginner tennis players at Turnberry Place. They were stunned with their court side view and expressed this in sincere cheers, almost naive and exuberant in nature. All of a sudden the stadium is quiet and Marc Kreisberger, a 3.0 player from Vegas sitting in the coaches box yells out loud, "Come on Hasi, first serve." As the seasoned tennis fan sat by, Marc Kreisberger and David Harris were on the edge of their seats cheering loudly and passionately, knowing no different. Soon the whole crowd began to add in and in minutes the stadium continued yells and cheers for Haas. Myself, I was quiet, knowing the coach's box was a

place of refuge for Haas, a place he concentrated on, almost shutting out the rest of the stadium. Words from his coach "Red" and friend "Bose" were heard and accepted. I was not led to interfere with that. But as I saw Dave and Marc intermingle their cheers with the statements of Haas's coach, I saw that somehow this was how it was supposed to be, it was right. I, however stayed quiet and observed Haas's commentary to his coach and Alex. To the crowd one might MIS read it as anger, but what I saw was a competitor that knew there is no time for celebration when Agassi or Kiefer are your opponent. There is only time for complete focus, and to achieve this, an inner rage was mustered and maintained through the dialogue with Red which kept Haas alert and in the now.

What amazed me about Haas's commitment to stay in this awareness, was when he had come back in the tie breaker being down to Kiefer 5-1 to tie it 5-5. Then Haas was down 6-5, with Kiefer serving for the set. Haas, 4 1/2 feet away, looked over at Red, over at Alex, at this point, over at the whole box, and yelled "PRESSURE"... as if to say "I love pressure...".. At this point I knew he was a champion.

I am not impressed with tennis players, anyone for that matter. I do not care what your achievement is. It is meaningless, without meaning. And the only way to achieve meaning is to have the pressure, and to, as Haas did, jump on top of it and ride it into the sky. He could have been lost in "Thought" about losing the last point, tie break and set... about the crowd, about it all... but instead he was here now, awake, alive and yelled "PRESSURE", sharing that inner rage with us at the most perfect time.

Then Kiefer double faulted and Haas won the first set.

The same kind of pressure comes to each of us in our own tournaments, on the court and at home. With kids it might be the pressure of worries or doubts, with adults, the same. And the only way to walk away a champion is to see that pressure as a lie coming to you and overcome it. Over come the "Thoughts" which try to make you upset, or unfocussed, lost in a day dream. Have you ever been playing tennis and all of a sudden you lose focus on now and begin to day dream? On the pro tour there is no time for that. Have you ever been about to serve and "Thoughts" come trying to pull you away, or "feelings" are created by these "thoughts" to tempt you to worry. You can succumb or rise above. You can believe these "Thoughts" and fall prey to them, or do as Tommy did, see them as lies and eat them alive. "PRESSURE"

The LA Open was complete with the Hollywood A list, and it was no coincidence that

Marc Kreisberger, David Harris, Alex Bose and Brittany, without effort ended up in the middle of it. Matthew Perry of "FRIENDS," Jon Lovitz, the comedian, the Brian Brothers, and of course Alex's friend and Mercedes-Benz Cup Champion Tommy Haas, stopped and talked with them.

How perfect was it that we go with Alex Bose and Haas beats Andre Agassi in the quarters and Kiefer in the finals in some of the best 3 set tennis I have ever seen. It was the first time Bose saw his former roommate, practice and doubles partner win a major pro event, even though Haas has won many. Most notable was his win against Roddick weeks ago in Houston, because it showed that after his 16 month off the tour, he still had what it takes to regain that #2 position.

Haas has overcome some other "Pressure" as well, and when I went into the press room I was silent, asking nothing, because with the same innocent and honest expression that Dave and Marc cheered him on, Haas opened up immediately saying how amazing it was that here he was playing on a Friday night in front of thousands of people on national TV, against his childhood hero, Agassi. He was so real about what he was saying that it came out perfectly. Asked by the press about his parents near fatal accident and his career threatening injury that kept him off the tour for over 16 months, he again was real explaining how the lie tried to come to him with "Thoughts " of quitting, how rehab was so hard and so alone, that at times the lie tried to make him think it would be easier to wrap it up, to quit. "But tonight made all that worth it," he described how he knew when he searched his soul that he was led to play the game, and no amount of "PRESSURE" was going to kill that inside him. He instead would kill the doubt and go on to win the Mercedes Benz-Cup in three sets, on center court at the beautiful UCLA TENNIS CENTER.

Sponsored by Mercedes-Benz, and COUNTRYWIDE HOME LOANS, everything was immaculate, including the Mercedes-Benz Cup and post match presentation. Here Kiefer was good natured and sincere. This guy is a champion, and I have no doubt he will continue to be a presence. Then came Haas, who thanked the fans and Mercedes-Benz, and then, moved to a sincere note thanking "RED, my coach of ten years" and Alex (Bose) and all the guys he brought up to support me. It was charming. And Red, who may have had his moments, months, or days of pressure as well, was enjoying the moment.

It is amazing how life has its twists and turns, and I have found that if you just adhere to what you intuitively know is right, and not follow the mental lies, doubts, worries,

fears and angers, all comes together. Such was the case.

As if that was not enough, there were so many other key parts of the weekend that made it complete. David Pate and his family were on hand to participate in an event that has become a family tradition for almost 20 years. David Pate won this event in the singles and doubles in the late 80's and won the doubles again in the early ninety's. His name and likeness were displayed all over the event and mentioned each time he walked onto the court to play in the over 35 division. On Sunday he played the Jenson brothers on center court with his partner Scott David and won in front of the crowd before the main event. He told VegasTennis.com junior reporter Julia Baltas and the crowd how great it was to be back, a tournament he once dominated with his 137 mile an hour serve. Pate, the best player to ever play out of Vegas, next to Pocho Gonzales and Agassi, beat Agassi, Chang and Stephan Adberg in the final of the Mercedes-Benz Cup in 1987, and it seemed just like yesterday. Life moves quickly, so while it is here, be here and now and enjoy each step. Live it so in the end, whether you win or lose the match, or deal, or skill, you have a knowing in yourself that you did so with class, honesty, and respect for the truth. Because in the end that is all that matters. Had Haas lost this weekend, still he would be a champion for that focus he showed on the court. Sometimes you do everything right and you still do not get the trophy. But the inner reward is the most amazing of gifts. Take it at all times, it is your to choose. Or not. It is up to you.

Also present from Las Vegas was Anita Lee and Julia Baltas. Julia and Anita won VegasTennis.com's LAS VEGAS SKIN AND CANCER CLINIC Circuit, with the most points accumulated over the three junior tournament circuit, which included MOBILE MEDICAL SERVICES BALLY'S CUP, CLUBSPORT SUMMER KICK-OFF AND JALDEEP DAULAT'S INDIAN OPEN. The girls had a blast meeting and getting signatures from all the stars. Julia Baltas, who writes numerous articles for this web site, earned a press pass for her dedicated work to VegasTennis. With this she had a chance to sit with and interview the Brian Brothers, Tommy Haas, "Red", David Pate, and numerous others. Her father John Baltas, always involved in local tennis, was there enjoying the experience with his daughter and her new found friend Anita Lee. Then Trenton Alenik, also the Las Vegas Skin and Cancer Clinic Circuit winner and Christopher Painter were there, along with Frideric Prandecki, his friend Mike from Poland, The Capps family, including Jesse, The Tang Family and the Gibson family. Kamren Linden and Eric were having a lot of fun, as Kamran seemed to be everywhere each time I looked around. In the press credentials booth I ran into former Las Vegas junior tennis player Danny Harrington. Danny is now Assistant Sports Information

Director at UCLA and was assisting the Press Director. We talked about his time in junior tennis in Las Vegas, and of course, how VegasTennis has been on fire. Keep in touch. You are invited to join the ride and participate any way you are led to.