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A Racket's Recollections

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WACK! hit a passing shot and the ball flew past our opponent's undignified racket. My partner walked to the back fence to wipe off her sweaty face. She walked to the baseline and I knew it was my time to shine. She tossed the ball high in the air and crushed it. *ACE!* I haven't hit a serve that hard since my partner hurt her shoulder. This match was becoming a formality-we were outlasting our helpless opponents. It was match point and the opponent came to the net as I hit yet another passing shot. Finally, the match was over, and I could take a break. My string was wearing down and it felt like I needed a haircut. My partner put me in my bed with my twin sisters who aren't nearly as good as I am. I fell into a deep sleep and dreamt of tomorrow's finals of a huge tournament.

I woke up to the light of the bright sun. My partner grabbed me out of my bed and started hitting with her coach. We were warming up with the normal routine: down the middle, cross court, volleys, overheads, then my favorite, serves. I loved serves. I loved hitting that poor little ball as hard I could. Lately I have been a little rusty because of my partner's injured shoulder. I'd been in bed for a month. I thought I'd been forgotten. But not today.

It was time. I looked across the court and saw the ugliest racket I've ever seen. She looked like me, same color, same style, but she didn't have my finesse. Her partner's form was not good either. The racket moved way too far back, she missed all the time, and her timing was off. Nothing was good about her. We walked up to the net and my partner said, "Up or down." Her opponent said down, so my partner spun me on my head. I had to land on up so I could serve. It was not a good spin. I couldn't get enough momentum to make one more turn to land up. It was a good thing that my partner's opponent decided to receive.

The match started off well. I was hitting accurate serves, forehands, backhands, and volleys. I was up 3-0 and I was ready to hit a winner. I felt that itch. My partner lined up right in front of the baseline and got ready. *BAM!* My first task was complete. I hit a beautiful winner down the line. My partner yelled *Come on!* I felt the energy go through me. It was like a switch was flipped. I was ready to fight.

We won the first set and were up 1-0 in the second set. I noticed that my opponent was trying harder. It looked like she actually wanted to win. Usually everyone I play gives up because I am so intimidating. But she started hitting winners that were impossible to get to. Her serves were almost as good as mine. And her volleys were actually staying in the court. I was down 3-1. I was getting upset and didn't know how to get out of the hole that I put us into.

The second set was one of the worst sets I've played. We lost 2-6. It's a good thing that I have a good partner because she always cheers me up in difficult situations.

It was tiebreak time and I was ready to fight harder than I have ever fought in my career. I hit winner after winner. But my opponent was doing the same. It was 9 all in the tiebreaker and I just needed 2 more points to win the match. *WACK.* I hit an ace and it was now my match point. My opponent went to the baseline to serve and she double faulted. I **WON!** I won the finals of a huge tournament. I'd never felt better.

From that day on I've learned that I should never judge a racket by its cover. Some rackets can *look* terrible and lesser than me but actually be better than me. I have realized that I might not be the best racket there ever was. I'll never judge a racket by its cover again, but my joy was tempered with a little realistic humility: I had judged another racket by its cover, and its possible I'm not the best racket ever to grace the tennis courts.