

Rachel Daniell

### On and Off-Court Success

Ever since the age of eight, I have competed on the United States Tennis Association junior circuit. With each passing year my passion for the sport has increased and driven me to continue honing my skills. All my hard work finally paid off this year when UAB awarded me a full athletic scholarship. However, tennis has affected my life in many positive ways besides giving me an opportunity to play college sports. My commitment to tennis has not only left me with athletic skills and a love for the sport that will last throughout my life, it has strengthened my character and molded me into a dedicated and motivated student.

Each tennis tournament and practice session I have ever participated in has helped form me into a woman of character. Over the years I have learned that I should always treat my opponents with honesty, even if it will not bring immediate success. Cheating a person out of a point with a bad line call might help me win a match, but I have learned that a good reputation and a peaceful conscience hold much greater value than any achievements resulting from dishonesty. My experience as a tennis player has also taught me to have a positive attitude at all times. Though I cannot always control whether I win or lose, I can always control my attitude on the court. These morals, honesty and optimism, that I have developed through tennis are absolutely priceless.

Furthermore, tennis has forged great perseverance within me. During my sophomore year of high school, a foot fracture kept me out of the game for several months. At first, I was extremely discouraged by the fact that everyone else was getting to train while I had to stay at home and allow my foot to heal. Nevertheless, when I came back from my injury, I kept working hard in practice and battling for every match just as I always had. My determination brought great reward because following my time off I played some of the best tennis I had played in a long time and had victories over some players that I had never beaten before. Remembering that I was able to persevere through one of the most serious injuries of my tennis career helps me to stay strong during other times of difficulty in my life. Perseverance is only fortified through trials. Playing tennis continually provides trials for me so that I can learn to overcome and persevere on and off the court.

As a student I have had great success applying principles from tennis to the classroom. Time after time my current coach has told me, "the harder you work at something, the more you will enjoy it." Just as the hunger to master a new shot or reach a higher level of fitness motivates me in tennis, the desire for more knowledge inspires me to dig deeper in my studies. Playing tennis has also helped me keep an open mind during school. I have had many different coaches and school teachers in the past. Each coach had slightly different philosophies on how to play the game, and each teacher had unique opinions and teaching methods. Exposure to multiple coaches has ultimately made me a smarter player. Therefore, I know that keeping my mind receptive to teachers' different views makes me a better student and helps me learn as much as possible. Good students have a certain mindset that is conducive to academic achievement; my tennis experience has given me such a mindset.

Although my identity does not lie in tennis, tennis has no doubt had a huge impact on the person I am today. Tennis has reinforced valuable lessons so heavily upon me throughout my junior career that it has left a permanent impression on me. I am confident that the values I have learned through tennis will continue to aid me in any challenges I face in life.

