



Inner Tennis, Playing the Game

W. Timothy Gallwey

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A phenomenon when first published in 1972, the Inner Game was a real revelation. Instead of serving up technique, it concentrated on the fact that, as Gallwey wrote, "Every game is composed of two parts, an outer game and an inner game." The former is played against opponents, and is filled with lots of contradictory advice; the latter is played not against, but within the mind of the player, and its principal obstacles are selfdoubt and anxiety. Gallwey's revolutionary thinking, built on a foundation of Zen thinking and humanistic psychology, was really a primer on how to get out of your own way to let your best game emerge. It was sports psychology before the two words were pressed against each other and codified into an accepted discipline. The new edition of this remarkable work--Billie Jean King called the original her tennis bible-refines Gallwey's theories on concentration, gamesmanship, breaking bad habits, learning to trust yourself on the court, and awareness. "No matter what a person's complaint when he has a lesson with me, I have found the most beneficial first step," he stressed, "is to encourage him to see and feel what he is doing--that is, to increase his awareness of what actually is." There are aspects of psychobabble and mysticism to be found here, sure, but Gallwey instructs as much by anecdote as anything else, and time has ultimately proved him a guru. What seemed radical in the early '70s is now accepted ammunition for the canon; the right mental approach is every bit as important as a good backhand. The Inner Game of Tennis still does much to keep that idea in play.



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