

RETURNING BECKER'S SERVE...

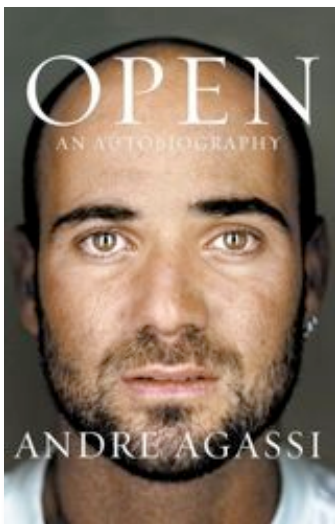
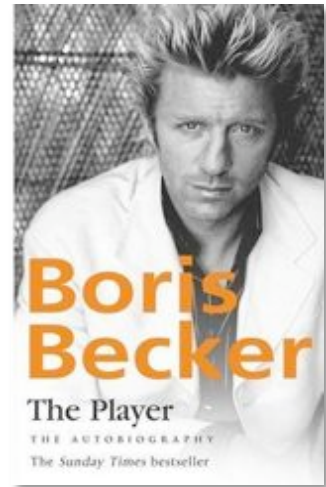
Peter Farrell.

The subject of **anticipation** in tennis is one I have always found fascinating. We have all heard about how an opponent's technique and tactics can help a player decide where the next shot will be directed.

But are there other clues as to what an opponent might be planning to do with the ball? Here's one that has not hit any instructional book as yet... I read Boris Becker's autobiography when it came out a few years ago, and here is what he had to say about why Agassi had great success in returning his (fantastic) serve:

"Andre...revealed why he was so often the victor in our encounters (10-4 to Agassi). It was a trivial thing, but rather incredible too. At some point in the late 1980's, he'd noticed that during my serve I opened my mouth and stuck out my tongue in the direction in which I was going to send the ball. He spent four or five years just watching my mouth. My serve was rendered almost useless, while his return was his best shot".

Boris Becker – The Player (Bantam Press 2004).



Now Agassi tells precisely the same story in his recently published memoir:

"I've figured out Becker's serve. Just before he tosses the ball, Becker sticks out his tongue and it points like a tiny red arrow to where he's aiming"

Andre Agassi – Open (Harper Collins Publishers 2009).

My point? Just that, like in many things in life, fact is stranger than fiction – you certainly could not make this up!

Both books are very interesting reads for anyone involved in tennis, and both are available at a discount from www.amazon.co.uk.