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One match, many stories

The Norman Transcript

NORMAN — Jordan Daigle of Lafayette, La., knocked off Ronnie Schneider of Bloomington, Ind., 6-4, 1-6, 6-2 Tuesday afternoon in the Boys 16 singles final of the USTA National Open at Westwood Tennis Center.

That's it.

Now you know.

Later.

Just kidding.

That's what happened, but it's not the story. The story, really, is whatever you want it to be, provided you know the options.

It could be Schneider, who's only 15 and looks like he could be 13, but found his way to the final anyway, his first final against national competition since moving up from 14s to 16s.

Go with him and you get to hear about his constant conversation with himself, like Mark Fidrych, on the mound at Tiger Stadium, full of energy, always talking.

Schneider would lecture himself without berating himself. A couple of times, he and the chair umpire disagreed. Like he was on a clay court, Schneider'd point to the mark, like that might change the call. But to his credit, even in disagreement, he called the chair ump "Sir."

One of those disagreements came on game point, the 12th point of a 16-point game, also the last game of the match. Get the call and Schneider wins the game. Don't get the call and Daigle wins the match four points later, which is just what happened.

Of course, the Schneider was upset afterward. Except that he wasn't. Not at all.

"This was actually a fantastic tournament," he said. "I got a set. I gave myself an opportunity to win. I just didn't close it out."

Maybe the story's Daigle.

Hard to do better than win.

As the top seed, he faced all the pressure.

The No. 27 Boys 16 player in the nation, Daigle's been playing like a kid in a hurry lately. The National Open is his third straight victory against a national field, and it's all come together after coming out of three months in shutdown mode that began about a year ago.

His back needed a break, and finally, he gave it one, putting away his racket for several months. Instead of getting rusty, he not only got healthy, but rediscovered his passion for the game. He's been on a tear ever since.

Not that he was ever that tired of the game.

"Since the first day I picked up a racket," he said, "I've loved the game."

His father, Robert, told the story of a couple of courts being built in their neighborhood. Daigle had started playing and liked it so much, "Every day, on his bike, he'd just ride over and try to find somebody to hit with," Robert said.

Now he's winning national tournaments.

Or the story could be the parents.

Robert was there for Daigle, and Anita, Schneider's mother, was there, too.

Watching the match, they offered only encouragement. Frequently, Anita would congratulate both players on a point well played. Following match point, four points after her son didn't get the call he thought he deserved, Anita continued congratulating both players.

"Nice match, guys," she said.

It may not seem like much, but everybody knows tennis has its share of crazy parents, and isn't it nice to see that those there for their kids in the Boys 16 final weren't two of the crazy ones?

Or maybe the story's Daigle and Schneider together. They fought each other tooth and nail. They disagreed on a few calls, one of them on one of the biggest points of the match. But when it was over, they were walking away from the court talking football.

Apparently, they're friends.

Who knows how far they'll go. Whatever, it doesn't appear they'll have to overcome themselves to get there.

So goes another USTA National Open.

A good guy won.

And lost.

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