

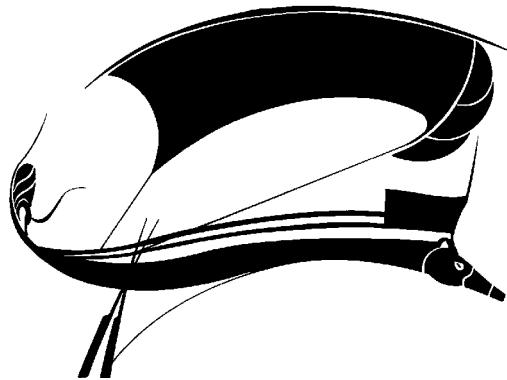
# Aethlon: THE JOURNAL OF SPORT LITERATURE



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*Aethlon* (āth-lōn): the original form of the Greek word meaning “prize of the contest; reward, recompense.” We like to think of it as also including the notion of the contest or struggle itself (*aethlos*), and skill or excellence (*arete*) that wins the prize.

# Aethlon



## AETHLON: THE JOURNAL OF SPORT LITERATURE

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# How to Play a Good Game of Tennis

John Hansen

## EQUIPMENT

Racquet – (A Hyper Carbon Hammer 4.3 or Wilson Hammer 5.2 (stretch), but let's go with the former because that's the best for looks and intimidating your opponent (oh, your rival will take another gander.))

Tennis Balls – (In this case, Wilson Tournament brand is most desirable. Playing with any other type of balls would be inappropriate. You know, like the 12-count bag for eight bucks at your local Wallyworld ...)

Attire – (A t-shirt that fits well, possibly, a favorite one (boosts confidence and enhances your play), the same goes for the pair of tight, but not too tight, Nike athletic shorts with pockets, you choose.)

Liquids – (Some type of sports drink or water will do. No carbonated drinks as you up your chances of cramps, or, at worst, a debilitating case of the runs.)

Tennis Court – (Find a close, but playable court devoid of cracks that expose the broken bits of crumbling black asphalt below or sagging pits that pool water from an earlier shower (always in the doubles alley for some reason). Surely you can find one court out of the bunch that keeps such imperfections to a minimum. Pick one you are used to playing on, but preferably a court your opponent has yet to figure out the contour of the lines, angles, lighting, windscreens, or how the ball reacts to clipping the top of the net.)

## DIRECTIONS

Put your beverage, extra racquet, spare t-shirt, and other belongings on the side of the net you want. Remember, tennis is a mental game. You could mess

with your opponent right away by placing your items on the same side. Worth a try. Everything you do affects your opponent's play, and not to mention, yours. Now, warm up with your opponent, act like you are long lost pals, create meaningful conversation. The match actually starts here. Hit the ball back and forth to get loose and guide the ball into your opponent's sweet spot (usually an arm's length away, belt high for maximum striking), but don't hit with pace (at least not yet), and be coy about hitting a decent forehand. You can count on your opponent to make a note of this and will most likely hit to your forehand during the game (let him think his observation and scouting skills are legit—nice try, though), and hopefully, you can surprise him by unloading it back for a forehand winner, where the ball grazes the singles sideline with the help of your Hyper Carbon Hammer 4.3 racquet (know that your opponent will go to the exact spot and see if he can find a light, sometimes darker, scuff mark of the ball on the blinding white line.) He'll see one. If done properly, this shot should sound like a crisp (almost deafening) "pop" (man, such great acoustics if you are next to a large building ... maybe I'll change my text notification to this). Alright, let me explain, we can do this together, okay? Lick your lips and put them together, try uttering, but with only your lips, the word "pop" without the "p" sound (I'll give you a minute ... to keep doing this ... imagine what the people around you are thinking).

After agreeing warm-ups are done, the official game commences. You or your opponent may spin a racquet while the other calls the direction of the symbol (like calling heads or tails during a coin flip), which is located on the bottom of the racquet (always choose up, always). If you correctly pick the direction the symbol faces after the racquet stops spinning, you get to decide whether or not you want to serve first, or you have the luxury of picking what side of the court you want to start on first. Pick the side the raging sun will not be in your eyes or the side the breeze will have the least effect on your overall play (just a hint).

Pick up the three yellow Wilson Tourney balls and put them in your pocket (go ahead, give each one a good squeeze). If you are right-handed, they should be kept in your left pocket, if you happen to be left-handed, they should be in your right. Pick the ball that is the hardest, which increases the chances of an ace (don't do a kick serve on your first attempt). Let the match begin.

Serve with force at the most favorable time. If playing in the day, wait for any strong gusts of wind to stop blowing around the few strands of hair you didn't gel enough that keep assaulting your forehead and right temple (so annoying), or immediately serve when you hear a car or truck engine revving up (from a nearby parking lot) make a crescendoing gargling hum with pings of rattling metal, where the owner decides it would be cool to hit the beat-up gas pedal (I imagine it's a clunker) four more times in a row. See, it won't affect you if you're used to being cheap and trying to find any advantage you can during matches (thank you, Robert, you skinny-long-haired-multiple-

sweatband-wearing hippie (I can still smell the awful Wrigley's Spearmint Gum), for instilling those values in me on the court at Sunnyside Elementary). If playing in the evening, wait for the cicadas' rhythmic buzzing screech to lull your adversary out of focus and do a quick serve when it's silent (like standing outside at 3 in the morning during a snowstorm). Or, if you prefer, wait for the cicadas' boisterous melodic calls in unity and then serve—think of them as your sixth man in basketball (rowdier the better). Next, put all of your strength into every service (oh, remember good footwork and go back to the basics if all else fails). If you hit a good serve, you should see a few yellow fibers around eye level suspend in the air just before gazing back at your opponent's return (if there is one). Grunt if you have to—make it your battle cry—if you will. Side note: Grunting reminds me of watching a professional women's tennis match (two Russian blonde beauties) on TV back in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade when my mom forcefully turned the door handle to my bedroom with such strength (sounded like she was going to break it off and the entire door) and asked if I was watching "a pornographic program." So, yes, grunt, but maybe not draw it out so much. I'm kidding, go wild, make it your own. Also, let your ground strokes be crisp and follow through with every swing. Let's reflect for a moment: Do you remember hitting shots by yourself on a humid summer night (with gnats buzzing in your ear every 30 seconds) on a puke-green-chipped-dented-wooden board that made an echoing thud (the ball never did bounce back to you the right way), where the paint would flake off floating to the ground? Yeah, hit like you did when no one was watching and pretended your match point shot was a cross court winner to win Wimbledon. Dominate your opponent.

#### FURTHER DIRECTIONS TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE PLAYING A GOOD GAME

Let's not forget about the mental aspects of the game.

Look all around and become familiar with your surroundings. (Watch how the ball bounces on different parts of the court (a good topspin and slice can be an equalizer). Visualize how you will strike the ball with your racquet. Find something to concentrate on that is behind your opponent and always look at this object with utter disgust. Make your opponent fear you. Hope that your adversary feels you may be a borderline psychopath or a recent graduate of an anger management class on the verge of relapse.

Now, don't let the wind get on your nerves and spoil a sure victory. (Which might be the case if you have a horrible temper and no self-control.) Some shots may carry and drift out of bounce, or you might totally mishit one and watch it clear the fence (this isn't baseball, you know). However, you need to get ahold of yourself and adjust accordingly. Just keep the ball in play, don't hit erratically (be a pusher, yeah, be one of *those* people ... I hate pushers ... sorry, I digress.) If your opponent cannot adjust, glance at him with a smile, laugh, and maybe even blurt out a few wisecracks for his poor decision making (make sure

spectators can clearly hear—they appreciate the humor, you know). It's vital he knows you keep a running tally of all unforced errors, but more importantly, can openly acknowledge his mishaps. Trust me, okay?

Oh, really quick, back to serving. If you profusely sweat outside (I could sit on a court and stretch a few minutes before a game and you could see a shadowy imprint of my derrière against the dark green surface—I'd quickly stand on top of it so others wouldn't notice), take the time to properly wipe the perspiration away from your eyes (like 45 seconds if needed—no one likes to wait ... so ... make 'em wait).

If there are people watching, act like you have a lot of energy. Show off, hit with authority, yell (different, random inflections work here), and appear formidable. Don't hold back. If there is someone that has caught your eye—or vice versa—watching and checking you out (or, although highly unlikely, they keep checking out your opponent), don't disappoint, victory is a must now. Make chit-chat on the side in between games (or if you suspect you have no chance, instead talk trash about your rival—it doesn't necessarily have to be true, but points if you've done research on him the night before and bonus points if you use the salacious information in your banter). This will agitate your opponent on many levels. When switching sides, you can also take a swig of water (only use water) and pretend to sneeze (blame hay fever) or calmly allow some to dribble out as if you've just been shot up with a dose of novocaine (because you swallowed a bug, okay?—your choice, but do this on your adversary's side of course (he won't be able to control his eyes wandering back to the abstract water patterns), but then be overly apologetic and hold eye contact, acting like you just committed some horrid offense). Allow me to tell you a brief story. I did this once in high school. My opponent muttered "fucking asshole" just loud enough where I was the only person who could hear it (that messed with me the last few games of the match because I didn't expect that retort). When I asked my parents about this after the meet was over, they claim they didn't hear a thing—"He seemed well-mannered and polite." Fucking asshole.

#### WAITING TO BE SEEN AS GOOD

Yeah, after about two or three hours of match play (the typical amount of time it usually takes to finish an official match), you will have the victory over your opponent (in fact, you've probably broken his spirits) and the admiration of the audience (if there is one).

It's beneficial to have someone you know watching,  
then you will have someone to witness your victory  
over a worthy opponent, and not make you look  
like a horrible liar. It will take time to be labeled  
as a good player, but it will come sooner or later.  
Act like you are a good player, it's all about show.

AT LAST

Well, everyone, that is pretty much it,  
on how to be good, that is, but as you know, my friends,  
there is some more to it. So good luck.  
Be good.

## Contributors' Notes

**Les Bares**'s poems have appeared in *The Cream City Review*, *Stand Magazine* (U.K.), *The Midwest Review*, *The San Pedro River Review*, *Southword* (Ireland), *Parhelion*, and other journals. He won the 2018 Princemere Poetry Prize and was one of the winners of the 2015 *Streetlight Magazine* poetry contest. He lives in Richmond, Virginia.

**Richard Black** is associate professor of English at Northwest Missouri State University, where he teaches writing and American Literature. In March 2020 he and his father traveled to Spring Training in Florida under the shadow of Covid-19; this experience is the subject of his work-in-progress, a personal essay titled "Spring Training at the End of the World." His work appears in the pages of *Southwestern American Literature*, *Studies in American Naturalism*, the *Mark Twain Annual*, and *Aethlon: The Journal of Sport Literature*.

**Robert Cooperman**'s latest collection is *The Ghosts and Bones of Troy*. Forthcoming from Finishing Line Press is a chapbook, *All Our Fare-Thee-Wells*, Cooperman's latest love letter to the Grateful Dead.

**Dallas Crow** teaches English at Breck School in Golden Valley, Minnesota. His writing (fiction, nonfiction, and poetry) has appeared in a number of publications, including *English Journal*, *The Flyfish Journal*, *Marathon & Beyond*, *Poet Lore*, and *Tar River Poetry*. His poetry chapbook, *Small, Imperfect Paradise*, is available from Parallel Press at the University of Wisconsin.

**John Davis** is the author of two collections, *Gigs* and *The Reservist*. His work has appeared recently in *DMQ Review*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *One* and *Rio Grande Review*. He lives on an island in Puget Sound.

**Liam Ferney**'s most recent collection, *Hot Take*, was shortlisted for the 2019 Judith Wright Calanthe Award. His previous collection, *Content*, was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Award and the Judith Wright Calanthe Award. His other books include *Boom* (Grande Parade Poets), *Career* (Vagabond Press) and *Popular Mechanics* (Interactive Press). He is a media manager, holder of the all-time games record for the New Farm Traktor Collective and convener of the Saturdays readings in Brisbane.

**Tom Gartner**'s fiction and poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including *California Quarterly*, *The Madison Review* and most recently *New Limestone Review*. One story was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He lives just north of the Golden Gate.

**Jesse Goldberg-Strassler** calls the play-by-play for the Lansing Lugnuts, the Toronto Blue Jays' Class A affiliate in the Midwest League, and Central Michigan University women's basketball. In 2019, he was named Ballpark Digest's Minor League Baseball Broadcaster of the Year.

**John Hansen** received a BA in English from the University of Iowa and MA in English Literature from Oklahoma State University. His work has appeared in *The Summerset Review*, *The Pluralist*, *Philological Review*, *The Griot: The Journal of African American Studies*, *PopMatters*, *Literary Yard*, and *Philosophy Pathways*. He is English Faculty at Mohave Community College in Arizona.

**Andy Harvey** is a lecturer in the School of Sport and Exercise Science at Swansea University, UK where he teaches sports ethics and integrity. He has an interest in literature as a site to explore the relationship between sport and society and has published numerous articles on sport fiction. He can be contacted at a.n.harvey@swansea.ac.uk.

**Max Heinegg** lives and teaches English in Medford, MA. His poems have appeared in *The Cortland Review*, *Thrush*, *Nimrod*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *Stone Canoe*, among others. He is also a singer-songwriter whose records can be heard at [www.maxheinegg.com](http://www.maxheinegg.com).

Originally from Baguio City, **Luisa A. Igloria** is the author of *Maps for Migrants and Ghosts* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2020) and 14 other books of poetry. She has received many awards including the May Swenson Prize and the 2015 Resurgence Poetry Prize (UK), the world's first major ecopoetry award. She teaches on the faculty of the MFA Creative Writing Program at Old Dominion University, and was recently appointed Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia (2020-2022).

**Dean Jollay**'s stories have appeared in *Aethlon*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Limestone Journal*, *New Plains Review* and elsewhere. Born and raised in Ohio, he now lives in St. Petersburg, Florida, and is the founder of AHEAD, a nonprofit serving at-risk students and their families.

**Laurence Klavan** is author of the story collection, ““The Family Unit’ and Other Fantasies,” (Chizine). He wrote the novels, “The Cutting Room” and “The Shooting Script” (Ballantine) and with Susan Kim co-authored the YA graphic novels, “Brain Camp” and “City of Spies” (First Second) and the YA fiction trilogy, “Wasteland” (HarperTeen). He won the Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America and was nominated for two Drama Desk awards for the book and lyrics to “Bed and Sofa” (Vineyard Theatre, NY; Finborough Theatre, London).

**Eddie Krzeminski** received his MFA from Florida International University. His work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Grist*, *Split Lip*, *Sport Literate*, and elsewhere. He teaches writing classes in Southwest Florida.

**Justin Ross Muchnick** recently graduated from Stanford University, where he studied classics and art history. His work has been published in a wide variety of academic journals and popular magazines, including *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*; *The Blizzard: A Football Quarterly*; and *FourFourTwo*.

**Scott Nadelson** is the author of a novel, a memoir, and five collections of short fiction, most recently *One of Us* (BkMk Press, 2020). Recipient of the Reform Judaism Fiction Prize, the Great Lakes Colleges New Writers Award, and an Oregon Book Award, he teaches at Willamette University and in the Rainier Writing Workshop MFA Program at Pacific Lutheran University.

**Daniel A. Nathan** is a Professor of American Studies at Skidmore College, where he holds the Douglas Family Chair in American Culture, History, and Literary and Interdisciplinary Studies. He is the author, editor, or co-editor of four books and has contributed to numerous journals and edited volumes. Nathan has served as the Film, Media, and Museum Reviews editor for the *Journal of Sport History*, is on several editorial boards, and is Past President of the North American Society for Sport History.

**Paul Nelson** directed Creative Writing for Ohio University for a decade. His ninth book of poetry, *Learning to Miss*, Guernica Editions, 2018, and his first book of fiction, *Refrigerator Church*, Tailwinds Press, NYC, 2019, are on Amazon Books. The title story and the novella, from this book, have each been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. After fourteen years on O'ahu, and another three on the Olympic Peninsula, he has moved "home" to Kennebunk, Maine, where he used to run his dogs on the blueberry barrens, woodroads and beaches after summer tourists went home. Here he can watch complete broadcast of Celtics and Red Sox games with other lunatics.

**Isaac Rankin** lives in Asheville, NC, where he works at an all-boys boarding school, Christ School. Isaac serves as Associate Director of Advancement and wears many other boarding school hats, including teacher, coach, and adviser. When he's not immersed in school life, Isaac enjoys traveling near and far, following sports obsessively, reading and writing across genres, and chasing his son in the backyard. His poems have recently appeared in *Apeiron Review* and *Sky Island Journal*.

**John Reinhart** grew up practicing his full windup while waiting for his parents to finish chatting after church services, in grocery store aisles, or against his garage wall with rotten apples. He enjoyed trading knuckleballers or smooth-fielding shortstops for hotshot homerun hitters, collecting piles of cardboard friends. Now retired from practicing his fastball, Reinhart has transferred his practice to his own children, along with a universe of late 1980s-early 1990s baseball cards. He is the author of seven poetry collections. You may find more of his work at <http://home.hampshire.edu/~jcr00/reinhart.html>.

**Matthew Schultz** is the Writing Center Director at Vassar College where he teaches Irish Studies and creative writing. He is the author of two novels, *On Coventry* (2015) and *We, The Wanted* (2021).

**Jimmie Smith Jr.** has an MFA in Creative Writing from Chicago State University. He also has two Bachelor of Arts degrees (one in English and one in Journalism) from Michigan State University. He has been living in Chicago for ten years, and he currently works as an English/Writing tutor and as a freelance sports announcer.

**John Soares** has taught courses on sport history at Notre Dame. His father, a former minor league hockey player, college coach and NHL scout, spent some time in the same league with the Johnstown Jets. Soares' recent publications, on recent U.S. history or international hockey, have appeared in various academic journals and anthologies, and in *The Midwest Quarterly*.

A Yankees fan from the Mickey Mantle to Derek Jeter eras, **Henry Stimpson** has rooted for the Red Sox for more than 20 years. His poems, essays, humor, and articles have appeared in *Cream City Review*, *Lighten Up Online*, *Rolling Stone*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *The Auroean*, *Common Ground Review*, *Vol1Brooklyn*, *Poets & Writers*, *The Boston Globe*, *Yankee*, *New England Ancestors*, *New England Monthly*, *Bostonia*, *Boston Phoenix*, *Beauty/Truth*, *Embodied Effigies*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Ovunque Siamo* and others. He's been a public relations consultant and freelance writer since 1984; before that he was a reference librarian, prison librarian, and cabdriver. He lives in Wayland, Massachusetts.

**Kareem Tayyar**'s novel, *The Prince of Orange County* (Pelekinesis), received the 2020 Eric Hoffer Award for Young Adult Fiction, and he is a recipient of a 2019 Wurlitzer Poetry Fellowship.

**Tim Wenzell** is an Associate Professor of English at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. In addition to publishing many short stories, poems, and essays in journals, he is the author of the novel *Absent Children, Retrievals: Collected Poems*, *Emerald Green: An Ecocritical Study of Irish Literature*, and the editor of *Woven Shades of Green: An Anthology of Irish Nature Literature* (Bucknell University Press, 2019). Wenzell's short story collection, *Velvet Shipwrecks*, and African American literature anthology, *Another Green World*, will be published soon.

**Jeffrey Wolf** holds an MFA from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. He was a finalist for the *Third Coast Fiction Prize*, and his stories have appeared or are forthcoming in *Jewish Fiction* and *Unlikely Story*. He currently lives in Chicago.