

**BOOK CLUB KIT**

# ***CARRIE SOTO IS BACK***

***TAYLOR JENKINS REID***





Dear reader,

## ***CARRIE SOTO IS BACK!***

If you've read *Malibu Rising*, you may recognize Carrie's name. But you absolutely do not need to have read *Malibu* to come along on the journey of my new novel, *Carrie Soto Is Back*.

Carrie Soto retired as the most-decorated tennis player of all time in 1989 and now it's 1994—and she has just witnessed new phenom Nicki Chan match her Grand Slam record. So she's coming out of retirement at the age of 37 in order to play in all four Grand Slams and take back her record.

I had an absolute blast creating Carrie. She is prickly and grumpy and out to win. She is just, overall, a real pain in the ass of a woman and I love her for it. And I had just as much fun creating her loving father, Javier, her equally grumpy sparring partner Bowe, and her annoyingly cheery, absolutely crushing rival Nicki.

Nobody wants her to return. Nobody thinks she can do it. But what other people think never did matter very much to Carrie. That's why they call her a bitch under their breath.

Well, the bitch is back.

This is my *Friday Night Lights* with tennis, my *Rocky* with a woman who's almost 40, my *Borg vs. McEnroe* with women rivals out to destroy each other. Also, there's a cute boy. Every good sports story needs a cute boy—there to support the female champ—right?

Xo  
TJR





# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe *Carrie Soto Is Back* to a friend? What would you consider as its major themes?
2. Describe the character Carrie Soto in three words. If you had the opportunity to change one thing about her, what would it be, and why?
3. Discuss the media's treatment of Carrie Soto. Early on, journalists called her "The Battle Axe." How much do you think that was warranted? How are the male and female players treated differently in the press?
4. Who were some of your favorite characters in the novel and why? Were there characters you considered villains? Why, or why not?
5. What makes Carrie's bond with her father so strong?
6. When Carrie's dad presses her about dating Bowe, she responds: "I'm not dating anyone. You can pretty much always assume that." What's your theory on why Carrie refrains from any sort of romantic life?
7. Carrie sees tennis as a world of winners and losers. What do you think of that view? How can such an outlook be beneficial, and how could it be detrimental?
8. Nicki Chan takes up a lot of real estate in Carrie's head. How do their styles differ, both on the court and in life? What do you think Carrie learned from Nicki?
9. Aside from Nicki, which of Carrie's rivals did you most enjoy seeing her play against? Were there any of her competitors you felt drawn to, or repelled by? Please explain.





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Cont.)

10. Melbourne. Paris. London. New York. If you could watch Carrie Soto play in one venue, which would it be and why?
11. In the entrance hall at Centre Court at Wimbledon, there is an inscription above the doors and a quote from "If—," a poem by Rudyard Kipling: "If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster / And treat those two imposters the same . . ." What does this quote mean to you?
12. When Javier is coaching Bowe, he suggests more of an open stance, to which Bowe responds: "I'm not messing with my footwork now. . . . I just beat one of the greatest players in the world with my stance." Javier then says "Good is the enemy of great." What do you think Javier means by that observation?
13. The tabloids were vicious, leading Carrie to posit: "*I should never let on how much I wanted to win or, worse, that I believed I deserved to win.*" What's your take on how the media in the novel presented Carrie's story?
14. How did Carrie's relationship to Bowe change her life? How did it change his?
15. *Carrie Soto Is Back* is very cinematic. Who would you cast for the movie in the roles of Carrie, Bowe, Javier, and Nicki Chan?
16. What is the greatest thing Carrie Soto has learned by the end of the novel?





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## **CARRIE SOTO IS BACK**

"I am coming out of retirement for the 1995 season to play all four Grand Slam events—the Australian Open in January, the French Open in May, Wimbledon in June, and the US Open in August—in order to reclaim the world record for most Grand Slam singles titles.

I congratulate Nicki Chan on her accomplishments in women's tennis. But her domination is over.

I'm back."





## **CARRIE SOTO**



The greatest tennis player of all time with 20 Grand Slam singles titles. She retired in 1989. But now, with her title threatened . . . **CARRIE SOTO IS BACK.**

# **THE MANY RIVALS OF CARRIE SOTO**

### **PAULINA STEPANOVA**

Baseliner with arms like cannons from just outside Moscow. In the Seventies, Stepanova vs. Soto is a rivalry for the ages.

### **NICKI CHAN**

Brutal, stunning player who matches Carrie's record in 1994. Brash and loud. Incredible violence to her serves and groundstrokes. Great at finding a player's weak spot.

### **INGRID CORTEZ**

Seventeen-year-old rookie Spanish player, over six feet tall. Aggressive, powerful, and arrogant. Sportscasters are calling her the future of women's tennis.

### **PETRA ZETOV**

A stunningly beautiful player with a rabid fan base out of proportion with her ranking. She's a model for Calvin Klein and does commercials for Diet Coke.

### **ODETTE MORETTI**

An Italian player sponsored by Nike. She only has one mode of play: power.

### **MADLENKA DVOŘÁKOVÁ**

A rookie 22-year-old Czech player. Her specialty is serve and volley.

### **CAMI DRYER**

A "perky and eager" British player who's not even 18 years old.

### **NATASHA ANTONOVICH**

A Russian phenom player who's five eleven and extremely thin. "She's fast with a full arsenal of shots."

### **CARLA PEREZ**

Also known as the "Baltimore Baseliner" because of her forehand power.



# TENNIS LINGO

**ACE** A ball that is served so well the opponent cannot touch it with their racquet.

**AD** Short for Advantage. It is the point scored after Deuce. If the serving side scores, it is Ad-in. If the receiving side scores, it is Ad-out.

**ALL** An even score.

**ALLEY** The area between the singles and doubles sideline on each side of the court. (The singles court is made wider for doubles play by the addition of the alley.)

**APPROACH** The shot hit by a player just before coming to the net.

**BASELINE** The court's back line that runs parallel to the net and perpendicular to the sidelines.

**DEUCE** A score of 40-all, or 40-40. (This means the score is tied and each side has won at least three points.)

**DROP SHOT** A softly hit ball with lots of backspin that lands near the net after crossing it.

**FAULT** A served ball that does not land in the proper service box.

**FOOT FAULT** A fault called against the server for stepping on or over the baseline with either foot during delivery of the serve.

**NO-AD** A system of scoring a game in which the first player to win four points wins the game. If the score reaches 3-all, the next point decides the game.

**NO MAN'S LAND** A slang term for the area between the service line and the baseline.

**RALLY** A series of good hits made successfully by players.

**SLICE** A shot that imparts backspin on the ball by hitting the ball with a high-to-low motion.

**SMASH** A hard overhead shot.

**STROKE** The act of striking the ball with the racquet.

**VOLLEY** During play, a stroke made by hitting the ball before it has touched the ground.

# ***CARRIE'S TRAINING REGIMEN***

**Conceived by Javier, El Jaguar, the champ's dad**

One. The serve. Determine your firepower. Establish control.  
Two. Footwork. How fast can you get from one end of the court to  
the other, how agile can you be?  
Three. Endurance.

## ***WEEK 1***

***RUN 10 MILES.*** "Every day for seven days, I put on my  
running shoes and take off."

***JUMP ROPE.*** "I focus on the burning of my calves, the  
ache of my arms."

***SWIM LAPS.*** "When I come out of the pool, my arms are  
limp, my legs wobbly. I am a newborn calf, unable to find my  
footing."

## ***AFTER FIRST WEEK...***

"Every morning, I work out. Then, in the afternoon, I do drills.  
And then, every evening, a little after 5 p.m., the lights kick on,  
and Bowe shows up and we play in the cool evening air."



# PLAYLIST

**"The Bitch is Back" by Elton John**

**"Mama Said Knock You Out" by LL Cool J**

**"None of Your Business" by Salt-N-Pepa**

**"Free Your Mind" by En Vogue**

**"You Want This" by Janet Jackson**

**"Fantasy" by Mariah Carey**

**"Rump Shaker" by Wreckx-N-Effect**

**"Baby Got Back" by Sir Mix-A-Lot**

**"Shoop" by Salt-N-Pepa**

**"Freedom! '90" by George Michael**

**"Little Miss Can't Be Wrong" by Spin Doctors**

**"Mr. Jones" by Counting Crows**

**"Hey Jealousy" by Gin Blossoms**


**"You Oughta Know" by Alanis Morissette**

**"Zombie" by The Cranberries**

[Visit Spotify for the full list!](#)







# BLUEBERRY SMOOTHIE

*"I wake up at seven fifteen. I drink a blueberry smoothie and eat raw unsalted almonds for breakfast. I put on my track pants and a t-shirt. I slip a sweatband across my forehead."*

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup blueberries (frozen or fresh)
- 1 (8 oz.) container plain yogurt
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup 2% reduced-fat milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp. ground nutmeg

## DIRECTIONS

Blend blueberries, yogurt, milk, vanilla, and nutmeg in a blender until frothy, scraping down the sides of the blender if needed.

Divide between 2 glasses and serve immediately.

Adapted from All Recipes



# TRADITIONAL BRITISH PIMM'S

*"As I step out onto the court, I feel the sun blazing down. I hear the commotion of the crowds. I look up to see stands full of well-dressed Brits with large hats and fascinators. I am flooded with the comfort of the scent of Wimbledon—fresh cut grass and Pimm's and lemon."*

## INGREDIENTS

250 ml (~ 1 cup) Pimm's No.1  
500 ml (~ 2 cups) sparkling lemonade  
½ orange, cut into chunks  
5 fresh strawberries, cut into chunks  
4-inch piece of cucumber, cut into chunks  
Small bunch fresh mint, roughly torn  
10 ice cubes

## DIRECTIONS

Add all the ingredients to a large pitcher and stir gently. Serve immediately.

From Easy Cheesy Vegetarian





# FURTHER READING

These books helped Taylor Jenkins Reid with *CARRIE SOTO IS BACK*.

