the result of 10,000 hours of dedicated practice. This has been the sales pitch of several widely read books, the subtitles of which include 'The genius in all of us' and 'Greatness isn't born, it's grown'.

If nurture is so dominant and nature such an irrelevance, then an unavoidable question follows: how many people, of all those born in 1756, had the potential, if they were given the right opportunities, to be as good as Mozart? Or in this case, how many women, of all those born in 1969, had the potential to become as good at tennis as Graf? According to the logic that a genius lurks in all of us, the answer must lie somewhere between 'most' and 'many'.

Ridley's answers were a bit different: four Mozarts and about 30 Grafs. There was mischief, of course, in attaching numbers to such hypothetical questions. But his answer rang true.

The surprise here is that the idea of talent finds itself on the ropes, beaten and bruised by those who believe in nurture alone. Acknowledging a role for genes, any role, can feel almost immoral. When I was quizzed by a newspaper about the genetic arguments in my book *Luck*, the interviewer sounded surprised – even though he agreed – that I dared to take on the gene-denial industry. His reticence was understandable. The anti-genes lobby often suggests that it is a short hop from recognising the existence of genetic talent to believing in eugenics. Personally, I'm pretty confident we can distinguish between the two.

The role of innate talent in elite sport, just as it has been written out of the causal narrative, is actually in the ascendant out on the pitch. Consider the example of modern tennis. In the late 1970s and 1980s, tennis was still catching up with the implications of professionalism. John McEnroe enjoyed going for a burger much more than going to the gym. It fell to the underrated Ivan Lendl, a less talented all-round player than his elite rivals, to dedicate his whole life to the pursuit of self-improvement. To protect his joints, Lendl pioneered aerobic training on bikes rather than road running. He even installed an exact replica of the court at Flushing Meadows, home of the US Open, in his own back garden in Connecticut. Less gifted than McEnroe, Lendl relied on being fitter and more prepared. He used nurture, if you like, to make up for a shortfall in nature. And it worked. Lendl overhauled his rivals and spent 270 weeks as the world number one.

One up for nurture. But what if all the top players hire nutritionists, masseurs and specialist coaches? That is what happened within 20 years. The upshot was that for 302 weeks between 2004 and 2009, the world number one was Roger Federer, widely rated the most talented player ever to pick up a racket. This view hardly needs anecdotal support, but if you're sceptical, perhaps you can take his greatest rival's word for it: 'His DNA,' Rafael Nadal says, 'seems perfectly adapted to tennis.'

During the amateur era and the early decades of professionalism, tennis players came in all shapes, sizes and training regimes. So it was possible to gain a significant edge through sheer hard work. But when a sport becomes fully professional and global, and nurture equilibrates, nature once again has the upper hand.

*The **Grand Slam** tournaments are the four most important international tennis events, including Wimbledon and the US Open.*

Questions 1–6

Look at the following statements (Questions 1–6) and the list of tennis players below.

*Match each statement with the correct player, **A, B, C, D** or **E**.*

*Write the correct letter, **A, B, C, D** or **E**, next to each question.*

NB *You may use any letter more than once.*

1 This player's level of achievement was successfully predicted.
2 This player's innate ability was not matched by a commitment to training.
3 This player was responsible for innovations in training procedures.
4 This player's level of success would seem to support the idea that talent can be developed through training.
5 This player has acknowledged the superior talent of a rival.
6 This player's achievements support Epstein's view regarding the innate nature of talent.

List of Tennis Players
A   Roger Federer
B   Steffi Graf
C   Ivan Lendl
D   John McEnroe
E   Rafael Nadal

Which statement best describes how you feel about Matching Features tasks?

☐ I feel confident about doing Matching Features tasks.
☐ I did OK, but I still need to do more work on Matching Features tasks.
☐ I need more practice with Matching Features tasks. I need to focus on …

▶▶ For further practice, see the DVD-ROM.

LIVEWORKSHEETS