



# Orindawoods Tennis News

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Orindawoods Tennis Club: 925-254-1065; www.orindawoodstennis.com

*"I like this place, and willingly could waste my time in it" – Celia, As You Like It, Act II, Scene IV*

## Effective Immediately:

### **Orindawoods COVID Rule Changes:**

The Orindawoods Board has voted to update the Tennis Club Rules and the COVID-19 Rules for the Club. The goal is to make the Club's COVID rules more in line with the current CC Health Regulations and what we have learned about COVID-19. The major changes are:

- 1) We will open up the Ball Machine for use (see below).
- 2) We can share tennis balls again and some surfaces.

You do not need to only handle the tennis balls that you are serving with. A foursome can all use the same tennis balls again (one can).

Both of these changes are in alignment with the idea that the virus is spread predominantly through the air, and not on surfaces.

For this reason, the other rules around wearing masks, physical distancing, play and go and no guests will remain in place to do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19. It's important that we don't "share [bad] air."

CC Health Department recently stated with the moving to the orange tier: *"Health officials caution that is now more important than ever to follow the state health guidance for physical distancing and use of face coverings, to keep everyone safe and healthy during the holiday season and to avoid a return to the red tier."*

CC Health rules are that without masks, tennis is singles not doubles.

Other OW rules include: closed seating areas, closed gazebos, and rules for clubhouse and bathroom use (one person at a time). These rules remain in place to maintain physical distancing.

There is also an enforcement policy that has been added to the rules.

A full copy of the rules is available on the website (court rules page):

<https://www.orindawoodstennis.com/pages/index.cfm?siteid=94>

## **Back to the Practice Court!!!**

### **Ball Machine Club and Use.**

Ball Machine use will begin again on Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to use the ball machine, you can either rent by the hour (\$8) or join our Ball Machine Club.

The Ball Machine Club will cost \$40 for November-March. The yearly ball machine club usually runs March to March, and costs \$110. Belonging to the Ball Machine Club gives you unlimited access to the ball machine when it is available. Only credit cards will be accepted for payment. See Keith or Patric.

The Ball Machine is used on court 3 (when available). When you sign up for court 3, you are considered reserving the ball machine as well. Ball machine hours are weekdays before 9am and from 10:30am until 6pm. On the weekends, the ball machine can be used before 9 pm, and from 12-6pm. The ball machine can be used in the evenings if the court is free that evening. It can't be reserved for evening use in advance. Ball machine reservations are for 1 hour only.

The Ball Machine is limited to non-prime-time hours so that more than one person can use the courts at busy times.

## **Tennis Tip:**

### **Tennis: A Competitive Game, AND a Group Activity.**

In my working in the tennis industry for almost 40 years (playing well over 50 years), and in my work with the USTA Board in the past several months, there is always a great deal of talk about "growing the game". Our Club wants to stay vibrant and strong as well. It has grown over my 25 years from a sleepy little club of about 68 members, to our

### **2020 Lesson Rates**

#### **Keith & Patric**

1/2 hour private \$45

1 hour private \$80

#### **Jennifer (is taking time off)**

1/2 hour private \$40

1 hour private \$75

Non-members add \$5

### **Weekly Lessons**

#### **Hit and Fit:**

*Canceled due to COVID-19.*

#### **Tuesday Ladies' Clinic:**

*Canceled due to COVID-19*

#### **Thursday Men's Clinic:**

*Canceled due to COVID-19*

### **Ball Machine**

Sadly, there is no ball machine use due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Court Washing**

The first and last Fridays of the month, 12-3 p.m. Keeping the club clean is a high priority.

### **Quotes of the Month:**

*"PAIN is:*

*Pay Attention Inward Now."*

*"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go in a group."*

*– Davidji*

active Orindawoods today, with about 125 memberships, sometimes as high as 140. Growing the game seems to be good, all are in favor. More players means we have lots of fun people to play with.

**Inherent Tension:** And yet there is this potential tension between tennis, and growing groups of players. Tennis is a competitive game. Especially singles, but doubles too, there is a great emphasis on winning, on getting to the top, on beating other players. It's in the rules, it is in the very nature of tennis, competition and sport. The goal is to win. King of the hill. Top of the pyramid. Stand alone at the top, holding the trophy.

But it can be lonely at the top. In a sense, this is the antithesis of bringing people together, and the inherent problem in growing the game, or having a group activity or full, successful, fun club.

How do you bring people together, get them to play, to enjoy the game, to keep playing, be friends and friendly, when the other people are trying to beat them, climb on top of them, and keep them down?



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**Junior Nightmares.** I remember as a sixteen-year-old junior driving several hours to get to Stockton to play in a tournament, playing one of the top seeds at 8 a.m. in the morning, losing badly and quickly, before I was really even awake or out of the car, and then driving back. "One and done," as they say.

How long are kids trying to learn the game, or learn to compete, how long are they going to put up with that? Most kids once or maybe twice would be enough, and they would be finished with tennis. Or at least tournaments.

This is what we call, "A very bad entry-level experience."

Think of going to a restaurant for the first time and getting bad food and lousy service. Are you going to go back?

**An Interesting Aside:** Have you ever wondered, why so many tennis parents seem "over the top?" Maybe it's because they had to keep their kids going when almost any kid, and most parents, would have stopped long ago. It's an "unusual" crowd to take a punch in the nose and keep coming back. That takes a certain type of person, eh? (Hey, we're all still playing, so maybe each one of us has a bit of that determination, eh? Good for you!).

**Another Tale:** I had really great junior student many years ago. She was really competitive, intensely mentally tough, won a lot of matches, she was one of the "winners". And yet, I remember having a conversation with her dad at one point in her later (high school) development, that if she didn't keep winning (this girl won a lot, but was moving up to tougher and tougher opponents, starting to lose more often), she would quit playing. This was very mentally tough kid. I mean really tough. She was a killer. Toughest mental athlete I ever coached. And yet if she started taking too many losses, she would look for something else to do (she became one of the best public debaters in NorCal high school competitions, as a matter of fact). This is kind of human nature.

What about average kids? Kids that aren't driven to succeed? No one really likes getting beat, and few, especially in the pain of the losing moment, can see the wisdom of Friedrich Nietzsche, "What doesn't kill you makes you strong."

Getting beat just plain hurts if you are fully invested. And if you are not fully invested, you have already gone into ego protection, and fight, flight, freeze. In other words, you are already gone, even if your standing on the court. You can't possibly perform well if you are not "there" (committed mentally / emotionally / spiritually, even if you are there physically).

**Adult Nightmares:** The same is true in league play for adults. There is a lot of losing going on, especially early on in your adult league career.

"Half the people that played tennis today lost," Vic Braden once quipped.

So tennis, the USTA, our Club, any group of players and friends, have an inherent problem: they want to thrive and grow, they want to welcome people into the group or game, but the very nature of the game and competition can be working against them. There is so much talk about growing the game at USTA meetings, but the normal solution is more leagues, more competition, the very thing that makes people want to quit, or shy away, ... the potential of losing.

Let's face it, the buzz of winning is great, awesome, thrilling, but for many, the fear and pain of losing becomes too strong, and they withdraw. And remember, there are lots of ways to withdraw. Playing at a level below ours is a "less risky" way to compete. But it is a form of protection, and withdrawal.

Even great players, competitive players, professional players, normally successful players, players with lots of trophies, and titles, go through a "dark night of the soul," where they are stuck in a losing streak, a slump, and wonder if all the work and emotional vulnerability is worth it. It's human nature, ups and downs, we all go through it.

Coming out of these dark times is great, but what if you get stuck there? This not good for tennis, either for the growth and health of the game, or your game.

**Self-inflicted?** We have to ask, what if the very nature of the game (of competition) is shooting itself in the foot?

**Tennis Success Throughout History:** And yet, over the years, tennis has maintained a popularity. It might not be the same as when millions of baby boomers were in their 20-30s and looking for a very mobile activity (the 1970s and 80s), but tennis has held on pretty well, and has better retention than most traditional sports (football, baseball, basketball, soccer, golf, etc....).

**Why? Tennis Is Intriguing.** Tennis is hard enough to be challenging (much harder to learn than racquet ball, pickle ball, ping pong, soccer, etc.) but easy enough that with work, you can see a decent and enjoyable rate of progress. (Easier than baseball or golf, which are really difficult, even when you are quite good).

The challenge comes in integrating people learning the game into competition. My college tennis friend Rick said, "You can't learn how to win until you learn how to lose."

In other words, until you can deal with the pain of losing, you will not take a chance (play) on winning.

How do players survive the school of hard knocks, of tough losses, of driving to Stockton at 8 am and getting crushed, and keep playing?

**The Truth of Moving Up, and Why People Don't Want To.** There is a woman here at OW who got pretty good and started playing league matches. She lost 80% of them or so in her first year, 70% in her second year, by year 3-4 she was around 50%, then that gradually improved, to winning 70% or so, after 6-8 years of playing. How many people can survive that first or second year? Even the first or second match? The answer is, not many. So many people stop playing leagues way before that. And remember, if you win a lot, you get bumped up, and back to losing again.

Why did she survive? How can you?

**What Do the Philosophers Say?** Thomas Hobbs said the world is a jungle. That is just survival of the fittest, and all that. Kill or be killed. Eat or be eaten.

**Survival in the Jungle.** How do you even do that? What do elite players do, to become elite players?

**Elite competitors change the way they keep score.**

They don't compete with others; not primarily; they compete with themselves.

**Competing with yourself.** What does that mean? Are you getting better? What can you improve? Is this week better than last? If not, what can I do now to make it better? What can I practice? What shots do I need to master?

My dad would say, every time you play, you learn something. You learn even when taking an exam. He looked at the entrance exam to Stanford as a puzzle. To him, it was. It was actually fun. He said he had a good time. Imagine that. I couldn't. He got in. I didn't.

It wasn't about winning or losing, even though those were the rules of the game, it was about learning something, getting better. Being curious. Actually "playing" (definition: "An exercise or activity for amusement or recreation"). Taking your focus off of winning and losing, removing the pressure, so that you can focus on performing, and not on outcomes. This is how you win.

That's how you get out of Braden's conundrum: "Half the people that played today lost."

Braden was a psychologist. He realized this was the key issue for tennis to thrive. If you're not OK with losing, at least some of the time, you're not going to be OK with tennis, (or life). Braden was a jokester, a comedian, he made learning fun. Fun is key. Joy is the fuel. Losing doesn't mean you are a loser. This is fundamental.

Being OK with losing, with learning. It's the game's big challenge, for each player to solve as well. Braden believed you were never losing, just learning. Vic was never afraid to have a good laugh at himself.

Because with this learning and improving attitude, you are winning, even when you lose (you are learning, getting better). In fact, you often learn more when you lose (imagine that, you are more successful losing!!!!).

And most importantly, you are learning to avoid pressure and find opportunity. Fun. Growth. Enjoyment in life.

**Pressure.** It is an absolute psychological fact, that no one plays well under pressure. As a sports fan, you feel it is a pressure situation. Say you're watching a basketball game, your beloved Warriors are down by one point, time is expired, but there is a foul. You can feel the tension. Your player just has to sink two free-throws with time expired, to win by one. I guarantee the player that is able to do that, wants to be on that free throw line, and is looking for an opportunity to show what he/she has. There is no fear, no pressure, only challenge and opportunity. They love it!

**Is this normal?** No. It is normal to be afraid, and to feel the pressure. That is, it is normal to choke. Players who can take this same situation and make it a challenge or an opportunity, are not normal. But they are successful.

And you can learn this. They did. It came easier to some than others, but you can learn this. The first step here is to realize that choking, getting nervous, is normal. And to not give yourself a hard time for feeling this way. In acceptance, we can often find the spiritual and emotional room to maneuver, consider other options, escape the norm.

**Normal?** So, there is a big shift. We don't want to be normal; we don't want to do the normal human reaction (be nervous, choke). We want to be exceptional.

**Tennis is competitive.** Singles is often thought of, or depicted as, a bunch of lone wolves hunting prey.

And we want people to join us? Grow the game? That is a disconnect. How do we connect?

**We need to make tennis fun and inviting.** A joy to play, and a good time whether you win or lose. That is how you grow the game. That is how you learn to stay in a game that on the surface, just wants to knock you down, knock you out, and not let you get back up.

In contrast society, announcers, even some players, say that only winning matters. That is a formula for misery and suffering, and a shrinking of the game. It's not helpful for those trying to deal with pressure.

**Another Reason:** When I look at the Orindawoods' courts in the morning, see all the people playing, all ages, I see the fountain of youth. People acting (in a good way), much younger than they are. People who are in much better shape (mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically) than their peers who don't play (I remember going to a wine-maker's dinner once, a gromet meal, and the physical condition of the others in attendance compared to my tennis friends at our table was shocking, to say the least). And in COVID times, CC Health says tennis is relatively safe.

On these Orindawoods mornings on the courts, there is laughter, fun, striving for individual improvement and excellence, comradery, support...

**And if you are truly competitive (love to win, that is why you play):**

**The irony** is, to win the most, to be #1, involves forgetting, at some level about winning, and just focusing on performing. In the moment. The challenge and the opportunity of performing. The players that win the most, are the ones that think the least about winning, and the most about performing. They are about empowering themselves, thinking thoughts that help them, and letting go of ideas and concepts that hurt them, or make it harder. That is what it truly means to be competitive: to maximize your performance.

**Win at All Costs:** And hey, if "win at all costs" or "I have to be #1" works for you, then more power to you. These ideas have certainly led to great achievement at times, in the right circumstances. These ideas are not wrong, they just don't work for the vast majority of people. If it works for you great, if not, you are not a loser, you just have to find another way up the mountain top. We need to find what works for us.

Sometimes, at one stage in our life or development, one idea works, but we need a new one as we change circumstance, hit a bump in the road, or evolve. For example, our training methods, attitudes and resources might be very different as a teenager than as a 45-year-old, 55-year-old, or 65-year-old.

**Driving to Stockton** at 8 in the morning to play one of the best junior players could become, "I get to play this guy. It so great to have the opportunity to play a good player, a person that wouldn't normally play with me. Who wouldn't give me the time of day. And it is a chance to show that maybe I'm better than everyone thinks."

In a grand slam pro tournament, there are 128 players. Only one will go through the whole tournament and not lose. The other 127 will lose their LAST match. So not only will they eventually lose, but the most recent memory will be of a loss. The wins were all before, in earlier matches. And then the next week, they have to go out and play another tournament. With a loss fresh in their minds, if they choose to remember. That is rough. You better be playing for some other reason than winning, in the traditional sense.

There was a player who reached #3 in the world, and felt his career was a failure. There is a choice there. Maybe that drive to be #1 is how he got that high, but in the end failed. Was feeling like a failure in your life's work worth it? Only he can answer that question. But there are other paths.

So, we make peace with losing the game, some of the time, to be a winner in life. That's the story, that's the point, that's a happy and successful life.

**Keeping Score.** Learn a new way to keep score. What can I learn today? How can I improve? It's great to be outside, having fun, exercising? Love being with all these other people. This grows the game in our heart, and in the numbers of people we have to play with. After all, it is not that much fun being #1 in a group where most of the other players have quit. Doesn't really mean all that much then, eh? I can think of several groups of friends, 4-6 people, that started to learn to play together. Took group lessons. Maybe one was more driven than the others. Five years later, only one is still playing. And having trouble finding people to play. That is kind of sad.

Some seniors quip that, "Every day I wake up is a good day." Well, every day I get to play tennis is a good day too. We just need to recognize it and be grateful.

Growing the game is really about growing our enjoyment of the game, whether you are a club player, park player, adult, junior, teacher, pro, official or fan. While it is true that half the people that played today lost, this does not have to define our enjoyment. Our enjoyment is up to us, our decision. Winning doesn't make you a winner, losing, a loser.

That's how we grow the game, we outsmart the game, the game that thinks it is about winning and losing, but actually has so much more to offer than that. We learn to overcome adversity by changing the score. We recognize the real score. Winning or losing is far too simple when it comes to our enjoyment. Our lives. Good luck out there!

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### **COVID-19 Club Rules, The Four Key Things:**

- Physical distancing is required at all times (six feet, more if exercising)
- Masks are required on the property at all times, with the following exceptions: 1. while playing singles; 2. while members of the same household are playing together; 3. while practicing by yourself.
- No guests are allowed on the property (without permission of management).
- Socializing is not allowed. Play and Go.