



Orindawoods Tennis News

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

Club In Pandemic Times

Fall Tennis

COVID-19 continues, and Orindawoods continues to adjust to try to bring you tennis in a safe, fun manner. Fun, safe tennis. Our goal.

CC Health has once again reiterated that singles is safe in terms of physical distancing, doubles is not. For us to be able to play doubles, we need to wear masks, as "masks are required where physical distancing cannot be maintained."

In addition, **masks must be worn properly.** That means up over your nose. You need to breathe through the fabric for the mask to do any good, for you or your neighbor. There is a joke going around the internet that you wouldn't wear your underwear down so things were hanging out, so don't wear your mask that way either. There is another video that states that if you have trouble breathing through a mask, you are the exact profile of the person that COVID is especially dangerous for, and you really need to be wearing a mask.

Masks are the law, and there are fines in place in CC County for individuals and business. Masks are required on a business property.

We understand that there are other courts and clubs that continue to ignore these directives, and permit doubles and clinic play without masks. And share balls (surfaces as well). The short-term desires of some of their members are more important than the long-term safety of all of their members. We let these decisions speak for themselves.

And we thank you for your understanding and compliance. We feel that the best solution for everyone combines the needs of public health, good economics and the health of the soul / spirit.

When someone sells their soul, they often do it willingly, enthusiastically, and many times quite cheaply. A short-term gain, for a long-term pain. Faust lives, over and over again, in many hearts and souls. It's a classic tale, played out on a local stage, daily.

With these dangers and safety needs in mind, we are not going to be holding our **Junior Tennis Program** this fall, but will continue to teach juniors, helping them to grow and improve, in the **private lesson format**. School is being conducted online, school sports are suspended for the Fall, and it only makes sense that in the after-school hours, we also continue to keep our juniors physically distant. We understand this is a hardship for all involved, and yet it is the best policy. Having junior clinics would undermine the whole reason for school being online, spreading COVID and extending the crisis.

Sadly, our **social events** will continue to be on hold, for the time being. A real loss, but a necessary one, and most cases of the spread of COVID-19 are in these super-spreader events, where large groups come together (parties, schools, offices, church).

With tennis, we are lucky to be outside, and the distances are normally safe, but we need to be sure to keep it that way. It's amazing how often we come within six feet of someone and don't even realize it. Like in doubles, or walking.

Wearing a mask all day long is difficult. Not one of my favorite things to do. And I miss the parties and socials that we have spent the past 25 years creating and building up. All the fun on Monday Team Tennis and social dinners. Twilights, teams, leagues, junior tennis, all the ways that we have come together to play this great game. It makes me sad that these are on hold.

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:

Sadly, there is no Hit & Fit at this time 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

We do our monthly court washing on Friday, the first and last Fridays of the month. Keeping the club clean is a high priority. Sorry for any inconvenience.

Club Emails

Keith has been sending out Club e-mails once a week. Past e-mails are available on the website, under information, e-mail history.

Quote of the Month:

"And this is the forbidden truth, the unspeakable taboo – that evil is not always repellent but frequently attractive; that it has the power to make of us not simply victims, as nature and accident do, but active accomplices."

–Joyce Carol Oates



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And yet, we are still playing. We are so blessed to be able to play.

I look at all the other activities that have been curtailed, things as basic as being able to go to school, or attend concerts or sporting events (I love baseball games, tennis tournaments, ballet, etc...), and I sit here with much gratitude that we can still play, even if in a restricted form. We are lucky!

The choice between keeping our friends safe, and the inconvenience of having to wear a mask, or curtail some of our activities seems like a pretty easy one, and yet, the temptation for short-term gain can be strong. Who wouldn't want to take that mask off? It is the very essence of temptation:

"And this is the forbidden truth, the unspeakable taboo — that evil is not always repellent but frequently attractive; that it has the power to make of us not simply victims, as nature and accident do, but active accomplices." — Joyce Carol Oates

Unfortunately, apologizing later after spreading COVID to family or friends, while somewhat commendable when owning up to one's failures, just is not good enough. We need to be better than that. "I didn't mean to hurt anyone" is lame in these circumstances. We need to care for each other. We need to think and plan ahead. **We need to use our imaginations to picture a world that could be bad, in order to live a world that could be good / safe / fun.**

COVID-19 Club Rules:

The Five Key Things:

- Physical distancing at all times
- Masks, wear masks when you are on the property. You can take masks off in only 3 instances (only when on the court: singles, members of the same household, practicing by yourself).
- Don't touch shared surfaces (especially tennis balls, but fences, doors, benches, etc...)
- No guests
- Play and Go (no socializing on the property).

And finally, **please don't come to the club if you are sick** (the obvious sixth thing, duh!). The full rules are available at the club (posted in the glass case and the sign-in board) and on orindawoodstennis.com under "information" and "club rules." **We're still doing great! Well played OW! Keep it up!**

Tennis Tip:

Taking It Up A Level

Let's say you are a 3.5 player, and you would like to move up a level. Maybe a 4.0 wanting to be 4.5. Think, systematically, "What I need to do?"

One method is to hang out with the right people. You get on a strong team, the tide rises, your little tennis boat floats up with it, and now you are in a new harbor. Of course, when the tide goes out, you float down with it, or are left

grounded in the mud flats, stranded and alone at a level you can't really function at. Stuck in the mud.

"Never take a short cut unless you have time to go back and do it over again right."

So, with that in mind, a bit more practical and lasting solution to moving up, winning more, higher rankings:

You are a solid player at your level. You play close matches, you win some, you lose some. 6-4, 4-6, 10-7; or 7-5, 6-4; or 4-6, 6-7 (5), etc.... You are competitive, you have some good shots, but you can't make the breakthrough.

Sometimes you partners hold you back, sometimes you are holding your partner back. Sometimes you win most of the time, but then play certain players with a style you just can't manage, and that brings your rating down when you lose to them badly (Can't beat the pusher, the lobber, the power player, the net charger, ... whatever your poison).

6-4, 4-6 (and whatever the match tie-breaker score is, win / lose), you are basically staying the same. Treading water, staying afloat, not sinking down, but not getting anywhere either. You are a solid [your level] player.

How do you start producing scores that will move you up? Consistently 6-4, 6-3, or 6-3, 6-2, or even 7-5, 6-1. You are winning about 12 games; they are winning about 5-7 over 2 sets. (Instead of close to 50/50 like before). The games can be very competitive, very close, hard fought, but you need to win about 2/3s of them. That's what it takes. The ranking computer doesn't care how many deuce games you played, just who won them. It's been said a 4.0 should beat a 3.5 about 6-2, 6-2. That's 12-4, even a bit more one sided (75%) once you are established.

This is where we return to our old friend Craig O'Shannessy. **Statistically, how do players win matches?**

They win their serve; they break their opponent's serve from time to time.

Let's dig a bit deeper. How do you do that? **There are four ways a point starts.** 1) You get your first serve in. 2) You miss your first serve, get the second serve in. 3) They get their first serve in. 4) They miss their first serve, get their second serve in. You need to be better at three of these beginnings than your opponent to win consistently over time.

As spectacular as it is to beat your opponent on their first-serve points, this isn't the one you are trying to win. You need to be better on 1) your first-serve points, 2) their second-serve points and 3) your second-serve points. The first two, with work, should be bankable. The third one, difficult but doable. Let's see how:

The server has an advantage in a point on the first couple of shots, if they play those shots well. After 4-5 shots, it is pretty much even as to who wins the point, server or returner. Once you're in a rally, the server has lost their edge. The server doesn't want to rally. And neither does the returner on a second-serve return. The only time you want to rally is on a first-serve return, that gives you a better chance, to stay in the point longer, even the odds.

On the points you serve, you need to take charge and claim your advantage on the serve, and the serve + 1 shots (your second shot). In doubles, this might look like strong serve down the middle, then your net player puts the return away. Or strong serve, weak return, server closes in and hits a forehand the receiver's partner can't handle. In singles, it might be a slice serve out wide. When the return comes back weakly, hitting the next shot into the open court.

Since it is much easier to take charge of the point with a first serve, it not only has to be strong, but go in often. So work on your first serve technique. **Successful servers get first serves in about 60-65% of the time and win about 80% of those points.** That would be 52% of your overall serving points right there, and you are well on your way to holding serve. If you can win 50% of your second-serve points, that would be another 17.5% of the points and you are winning almost 70% of your serve points, pretty much unstoppable. More than half way to victory. Go team!

Of course, getting to 50% wins on your second-serve points is going to be difficult. You need to hit a ball that is not a "sitter," a "just get it in" but a shot that makes them not be able to take advantage of you most of the time. If your first serve is good enough, 40% on the second will probably get the job done. The second serve is most valuable in those games, maybe one or two times a match (hopefully only once or twice) when your first serve is misfiring.

Bottom line: Want to move up? Improve your serve.

Misplaced work. Here are a couple of interesting statistics, "fastest serve", and "most aces" do not correlate very well with winning. In other words, power alone, is not what makes you win your serve, so don't work on hitting it harder, work on hitting it better. More in, better placement, good spin, deception. Of course, you want some speed, but speed alone is not the answer, and if speed is causing you to not get enough in (60-65%), then slow down. Because "first-serve percentage", and "first-serve-percentage won", do correlate with winning.

So does "**percentage of second-serve-points won**". Second serves are tricky, because the overriding feeling is "we have to get it in." But consider this, if you get 10 out 10 in, but they are so weak you are only winning 2 points, that's only 20%. Not good enough. What if you put a bit more on it, got 8 out of 10 in (double faulted twice, 20% of the time), but won 4 out of 10. That is twice as good as getting them all in. What if for three double faults, you could win 5 of 10, or win 5 of the 7 points where you got the ball in (71%) — a first serve kind of percentage? This is why some nifty players just hit two first serves (if you have a good first serve — 60-65% in play), rather than a first and second.

The goal is to win more points, not get the ball in. On all shots, not just second serves — "The Serena Rule".

Consistent players do well at their level, but they are seldom the champions

(or in this case, the ones that move up). They are just really good at being, and staying, a [3.5].

The Return: So that is you serving. What about when they are serving, you are returning, which is half the time.

If you want to move up, you need to own their second serve. Own it. Like your first serve.

That doesn't necessarily mean hitting winners off their second serve, but it does mean putting them on the defensive. Strong return at the net person, strong return right at the server's feet, strong return out wide, put them on the defensive, take away the server's advantage. Make them uncomfortable, prone to errors.

Your best chance is to make them miss the third shot (serve +1).

Biggest Return Mistake. After struggling to return their first serves, we are often, mistakenly, just happy to return the second ball and get it back in play. This is a HUGE mistake. Their second serve will be the weakest shot you will see in the point. It's short, it's safe, it is "just-get-it-in" stuff most of the time. This is your time, take your chance. Put pressure on them, force errors. If you just get the return back in, the server still has the advantage and will attack on serve + 1. If you attack, and they just get it back, you have the advantage on return + 1.

On their first serve, you are not going to win a lot of points but grab a couple of points. They are in control, so unless they have a really weak serve (like a second serve) just focus on getting the first serve back into play and hoping they go for too much on serve + 1 and miss, or play it too safe, and you get into a rally: a 50/50 proposition.

Breaking Serve, A Plan. If you play two doubles sets, about 18 games, in your ideal match 6-4, 6-2, each player is going to serve 4-5 times (9 times in singles). Say there are on average about 7 points in those games. In three of those games, the server is going to get 5 of 7 first serves in, and the returner is not going to win those unless they are very fortunate (server makes a lot of mistakes, so maybe one game in 20). But in the games where the server only gets 3 of 7 first serves in, there is your opportunity. Maybe you win one of the first serve points by getting the ball back and

they fluff the serve +1. Now you have 4 second-serve points to win 3. It takes 4 points, at least, to break. Here is your chance. Just getting the ball back and letting the serving team basically have a first-serve opportunity on a second serve isn't going to work. You need to attack, but in a way that forces errors (you have to get the ball in but put pressure on). Deep, right at the server's feet, is a good, relatively safe way to attack. A HUGE favorite on the Pro Tour.

REMEMBER: To consistently win matches and move up, you want there to be an advantage on 1) your first serve, 2) their second serve, and 3) your second serve. You don't really care about their first-serve points. No pressure there.

What do typical points look like? They are short and sweet. The most common point in tennis (singles or doubles) is a **serve in and no return**. By a long way: 25% (women's) to 33% (men's) of the time. Next is a serve and a return, and the next shot is missed (~20%). Then a serve, return, and serve +1, fourth shot missed (~17%). Finally, serve, return, serve+1, return+1 and the fifth shot missed (~12%). This is almost 75-80% of the points. Master this, the first four shots, do you best on the rest.

A rally with 10 shots happens about 2% of the time. 7 to 9 shots add another 5-8%. **Rallies are really uncommon in tennis.** Especially doubles, but singles too.

Most common point in the French Open, the "rally" surface (clay): one shot! The serve in, the return missed. Really! In Nadal matches, which are thought of as grinders: one shot. Nadal is the master of the one-shot point. The stats don't lie, even if our memories are faulty (and remember the 25-shot rally – the few times it happened – so exciting).

Tennis is serving and returning. That's what we have to be good at. Wow! We need to wake up to what is really happening on a tennis court. Look at the great players. They were either great servers (Sampras, Federer) or great returners (Agassi, Connors, Djokovic). Or both (Serena). *"Tennis is serving and returning" – repeat to yourself!*

Tactics and Strategy. We need to tighten these up as well. Stop giving away crucial points we can't afford to lose that makes the matches too close and loses our slim advantages when we are in control. In doubles, control the middle of the court. That's where you hit, that's what you cover. Of course, there are exceptions, but in general, play the middle, cover the middle. Tennis is not a game of trickery, it's a game of skill. Don't play to fool your opponent, play to out play them. Limit their options by where you hit the ball and cover those options. Singles: hit cross court, hit deep, wait for an opening. Then force an error by going for the open court, IF you can make the shot.

The statistics show that 1) there are more unforced errors than there are winners, 2) there are more unforced errors than there are forced errors. But, 3) if you combine winners and forced errors, that is a higher percentage of the points than your unforced errors. So the mistake in attacking is trying to hit too many winners. Think more of making it hard on them (tough shot, good placement, spin, deception) than trying to hit it by them. You'll still get your winners.

And finally, and always: **only hit shots you can make.** (I know, duh! But "Nike it": just do it!)

PRACTICE COURT: What do I practice to move up? (in a one-hour practice or practice match)

- Serves, first and second (15-20 mins). Repetition. Improve your technique. Serve well. Own it!
- Returns, particularly second serve returns (15-20 mins). Short balls, balls with no pace, own them too!
- For doubles: volleys particularly at the net (server's partner volleys – serve +1). (10 mins). These are your points!
- How to hit ground strokes off of weak shots, shots they just get back into play: serve +1, return +1. (15-20 mins).

I call these 3.5 sitters, because it is a shot that really works in 3.5 -- just get it in -- and as soon as you can handle it, you'll never be a 3.5 again. These are often second-serve, so you can combine returns and sitters.

- Of course you can play points, hit a serve or a return, and then play a serve +1 or return +1. Game situations. Link your serve with serve+1 by getting into proper position. But play points with these objectives. Short and sweet!
- If you have five extra minutes or so, hit some overheads. Maybe a few lobs. Often when a point is "won" with a strong shot, they toss up a lob, you want to be able to close the deal. Or lob, when you have been put under intense pressure. (Of course, you want to focus on the overheads, b/c you should be winning these points. Lobs are a prayer.)

Play Better. Doug King, my coach and mentor used to say, "Not doing well? Play better." It sounded like a joke; it wasn't. Focus on how well you play those crucial moments. Pick up a few extra points here and there.

What needs to be better is the four basic elements of tennis stroking: form, rhythm, footwork and timing. By accomplishing improvement here, I improve the four weapons: time management, placement, spin, deception.

The difference between 3.5 and 4.0 is a few points a match, won consistently, over time, over many matches. I remember watching Pete Sampras at the old SAP tournament play a top 100 guy. It was really close, but Sampras prevailed 6-4, 7-5. The next day, the paper said, "It was a routine victory for Sampras." It didn't seem that way, but he got one break in each set, and I guess that is the way it usually goes. A couple of points better at the right time separates us, #1 from #60. Just that, consistently. Match after match. The #1 player in the world, the #1 player at your level, year after year, wins about 54% of the points. That's how you move up. **Win 54% of the points.**

What NOT to practice: rallying, consistency, returning their best shots, hitting harder, per se. This doesn't pay off, because this isn't what wins matches. The problem is, it could be what wins points, so you have a great memory of an ace, a spectacular shot.... and think, "If I could just ace them all the time." But you can't.

Play smart, play percentages. Improve what helps make you better, not more spectacular. In golf there is a famous saying, "Drive for show, putt for dough." It's the little things, the routine things, the unspectacular things, that make you good. Not missing your shot, right before they missed theirs. You forcing return in, they miss serve +1. It's amazing how often that happens. Focus on playing the best shot you can make. Good luck out there!

