



# Orindawoods Tennis News

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Orindawoods Tennis Club: 925-254-1065; [www.orindawoodstennis.com](http://www.orindawoodstennis.com)

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

## Front Door Code Has Been Changed

Due to the late-night activity (see below), and the fact that the door code hasn't been changed in about a million years, we are changing the door code. The door of the Club House is open from 7am to 7pm. It cannot be opened after 10 pm and before 6 a.m. From 6-7 a.m. & 7-10 p.m., members can use a code to open the door. That code can be found on the Club website. Go to the Membership Page, and click on the link to get the door code. You will be prompted to log in, as the code is only available to Club Members.

## Late Night Activity

Since winter break, there has been several teenage gatherings at Orindawoods in the late evening hours on some Friday and Saturday nights. There have been a couple of instances where things have gotten a bit out of hand. No serious destruction of property, but leaving the lobby in disarray, and an occasional broken bottle. While these have been for the most part "well-behaved" activities, including some cleaning up, they are after club hours, and inappropriate behavior.

**Busted.** Keith and Patric decided to visit one Saturday, about 9:45 p.m. and talked to several teenagers. While originally it was thought this activity was by college students home on break, it was clear the participants were high school students. Pictures of cars were taken, and the word was put out that Orindawoods was not a place for such activity. The police were then notified that there was activity at the club. Orinda PD promised patrol car visits on the weekends. We have purchased security cameras for the clubhouse, which are installed and in operation. Be sure to smile.

**Access.** These teens clearly knew how to access the clubhouse after hours (knew the door code, which operates until 10 p.m.), and so some members are clearly involved at some level (may have just told some friends the code to go swimming in the summer). Patric and I did not recognize any of the kids involved on this particular evening.

Young people want a place to have "fun," unwind on the weekend, and there is an ongoing search for a location free from adult supervision. Orindawoods should not that place. Obviously, our primary concern is for the safety of the teens, and the protection of our property. Again, no major damage has occurred, but the lack of respect for the club, the property and the rules require that we put an end to this activity.

**Both boys and girls** were involved. Or is that men and women? And that is the point, isn't it? Late teenage years are a challenging time for our children. They have been given the full array of tools of adulthood (driver's licenses, access to booze, mature reproductive bodies and in some cases drugs) but they have no idea really how to "drive the bus." The road of life is open before them, and our charge as adults and community members is to help guide them safely through this potentially dangerous time, while giving them the freedom they need to become fully functioning, happy, members of society. It is a tricky business, because they need to make the decisions themselves, based on our guidance, boundaries, example and support. They need to have the freedom to "drive that bus", make hopefully only minor mistakes (there is very little learning without mistakes – but that is an entire different article), and keep on the road of life.

The weekend following our visit and taking these measures, there were no further parties. Hopefully the message was heard and accepted.

## Ball Machine Club

March is when it is time to renew your ball machine membership. If you are a member of our Ball Machine Club, the cost is still \$110. Please write a check to Orindawoods, and drop it by the office. The subscription runs from March 2018 to March 2019.

If you have never been a member of the Ball Machine Club, listen up, it's a great thing to belong to. For \$110 you get unlimited access to using the ball machine (when court 3 is available). There is some restriction, in that you cannot make a reservation for ball machine use in primetime hours (M-F 9-10:30 a.m., and evening courts and on the weekends 9 am – 12 noon). However, if the court has not been reserved in advance, and is open, you can use the ball machine at those times. The regular fee to use the machine is \$8 / hour, so you can see that if you use the machine only 14 times a year, you are getting a discount. Of course, there are members who use the machine well over 200 days a year, so it is practically free.

We charge a fee for ball machine use to support repairs, maintenance and replacement, but our primary goal is to get you out playing, exercising, practicing and improving. In other words, having fun! The ball machine is a great way to accomplish those goals. It's fun exercise (like tennis), and that is the best exercise of all.

## Used Ball Drop

When you are done playing with your tennis balls, please donate them by dropping them in the Used Ball Drop just to the left of the Pro Shop door. The ball machine and juniors thank you.

## Quote of the Month:

"Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose." – Bill Gates

## Weekly Lessons

### Hit and Fit:

*TRX workout (strength and stretching) & tennis drills using the Playmate ball machine.*

Friday 10:30-11:30 a.m. \$15

Saturday 7:30-9 a.m. \$20

On rainy days, Hit and Fit will be held indoors in the Clubhouse, a TRX workout. It's fun, it's a killer workout!

### Tuesday Ladies' Clinic:

Tuesdays at 9:30 \$5

### Thursday Men's Clinic:

Thursdays at 9:30 \$5

The men's and women's clinics are drop-in. Register for Hit and Fit by e-mailing Keith you are attending.

## Coach McCollom Wins State Award

Miramonte High School Coach and club member Michael McCollom won the California Boys High School Coach of the year for 2016-17. Congratulations Michael on this amazing achievement.

There are thousands and thousands of juniors that play tennis, and for 98% of them, high school tennis is the crowning achievement. Very few go on to college to play, and a mere handful play pro tennis. It is so important to have great coaches like Michael to help build the memories and life lessons these juniors learn playing competitive tennis. Michael has been a great advocate and coach for boys and girls high school tennis for the last decade. There are a lot of high schools and a lot of high school coaches in the state of California, only one is picked coach of the year. It's wonderful to see him achieve this distinction and well-deserved recognition.

Before coaching tennis, Michael was president of Orindawoods for several years. Way back in the day he coached track and field at University HS in Champagne Urbana. His is a life dedicated to making our community a better place to live, and our kids to have rich, fulfilling lives. Michael and his wife Wendy have lived in Orindawoods for 24 years and raised their daughter Tamar here (a darn good Miramonte player in her own right several years back). Congratulations Michael!

## Patric's Corner

### A World of String

Here at the Orindawoods Pro Shop we like to divide the world of strings into four categories; natural gut, multifilaments, polyesters(polys) and hybrids. The Babolat strings we carry in the Pro Shop include some of the top rated and best-selling strings from all four categories.

**Natural Gut** (made from cow intestine) is the "old timer" of the string world. Created over 140 years ago, by none other than Pierre Babolat himself, they have borne witness to every era of the game. While the newer synthetic strings have made their presence felt on the "string stage", natural gut strings are still used today on the neighborhood courts as well as the pro tour. The benefits of natural gut strings are superior feel and playability as well as excellent tension retention, while the negatives are that they tend to break quickly, they are expensive and they don't fair well when exposed to moisture.

**Multifilaments** are "the copy cats". Made with synthetic materials, they are designed to mimic the feel and playability of natural gut, in a less expensive, more durable and water proof form. While the multifilaments can't quite reach the lofty heights of natural gut's playability, feel and tension retention, only the most discerning ball strikers will be able to tell the difference. Also, like natural gut, multifilaments have a soft, comfortable feel, that suits just about all players, particularly the players susceptible to arm injuries.

**Polyester strings**, or "polys" as they are known in the industry, are "the rebels". Their creation had nothing to do with playability or feel, it was all about durability and control. Their wide spread use on the pro tour in the last 15 plus years has changed the game. While the latest versions have been infused with a bit of softness, polys are still very stiff strings, and can be rough on the arm. On top of that, they are the string least likely to hold their tension. Prompting frequent restrings to avoid the dreaded "Dead Zone" (see last's month's Patric's Corner). While definitely not the string for our young players or players with achy arms, polys are well suited for the big hitter and for the string breaker.

**Hybrid** strings are "the diplomats". They aim to bridge the divide between the softer, natural gut and multifilaments strings, and the stiffer polys. They mine this middle ground of durability and playability by literally using both types of strings! The strings in one direction are polys, and the strings aligned in the other direction are either natural gut or multifilaments. Federer, Djokovic, Pliskova, Tsonga and Thiem are just some of the players on the pro tour using a hybrid set up. Do keep in mind that since poly strings are involved, tension loss will still be an issue, and frequent restrings are necessary. -- Patric

## Tennis Tip:

### Tennis and Alignment

To contact a tennis ball, you need to align the racquet with the flight of the ball so that the racquet and the ball occupy the same space at the exact same time. In addition to that (often forgotten in the desperation of the moment) that the racquet face must also align with the court, and where you want to place the ball on its return over the net.

The simple solution would be to point the racquet towards the court, and run around so that the ball hits the racquet. This is not far from what we do on a volley. There is a bit of shaping, moving the racquet tip from forward to back, high to low, outside to in, but the alignment isn't too difficult here, if you can get to the ball.

Groundstrokes and serves are another matter, mainly because there are other issues. We not only need to meet the ball, and direct it, but we often also want add force (and spin – force applied indirectly on an angle to the ball). To create force, the racquet must move. Moving the racquet takes it out of alignment with the ball, and with the target on the other side of the net. Dis-alignment is essential for creating force, the question is how we do it, and how far out of alignment we go. Farther out of alignment, more potential power, but much harder to align.

**Pros.** When Nick Kyrios starts his serve, his racquet face is pointed towards the fence behind him. Milos Raonic's racquet face is pointed towards the sky, That's pretty far out of alignment. Djokovic is famous for pointing his racquet face towards the back fence on his forehand windup, and Nadal's racquet face not only points towards the ground, but also almost touches it. Federer's racquet face is still facing the side fence on the serve, right before contact, 90 degrees out of alignment. It's no wonder these shots are huge!

**Force.** It is bringing a misaligned racquet back into alignment that creates force, and leads, if done and timed properly, to contact and aiming. In fact, the racquet is often twisting and turning so much that it is only in alignment with the ball and court for a very brief time. This seems much more difficult than just lining the racquet up towards the target and pushing. Blocking and pushing the ball is an easier way to learn, but doesn't leave you playing very well. You can't generate any power. The twists and turns of misalignment are a bit difficult to master, but they leave you in the end, a much better player (better power, spin, deception and even, in the end, more control through spin as well as directional considerations).

*"There is an easy way to learn, that is hard to play. And there is a hard way to learn, that is easy to play." – Doug King, elite teaching pro*

**The Challenge.** Misaligning from the ball is more difficult to learn, but we don't want it to be impossible. There are ways to be out of alignment, allowing us to have power, that don't take us so far away from the ball that it is impossible to align at the right time. Most of these moves involve turns, or rotations of various parts of the body, rather than swings of the arm.

If you take your racquet back (worst tennis tip ever), to swing it, your hand is quite far away from the contact point with the ball. This makes it very hard to find the ball, especially if it is moving fast. If instead, you used shoulder and spine rotation, to twist away from the ball, you could keep your hand relatively close to the ball, and still get quite far out of alignment. In tennis, you want to wind up, not take a back swing.

**Grips and Moves.** How do we get out of alignment, then get into alignment at the last moment? When playing a topspin groundstroke, the head of the racquet should be below the handle, and the racquet should approach the ball (contact) from the low, inside quadrant. The movement is low and inside to high and outside the contact point. If you hit the ball in the net, you probably got the racquet head too high, and outside the ball, too soon (you are early). If it goes flying long, then you moved forward too much, rather than just lifting from the shoulder (this could be early too).

When playing an underspin shot, the racquet head should be above the handle (wrist cocked), and the racquet should approach the ball from high and outside the ball. The movement is from high outside to low inside on the slice.

We use grips to facilitate these moves. More continental on the racquet up positions, and more semi-western on the lower, racquet head dropped positions. That is why we see more extreme grips in today's power groundstroke game.

**Shoulders.** On the forehand and serve we use external shoulder rotation to take us out of alignment, and internal shoulder rotation to turn the racquet from being out of alignment to squaring with the ball and the target. Since internal shoulder rotation is about the fastest thing you can do with the human body, this is a tremendous source of power, as well as a way to be far out of alignment right up to the last moment and still not be late to contact and aiming. On the backhand, we use internal rotation to get out of alignment, and external rotation to get back into square.

**What's so hard about this?** It is very scary to not be lined up to the ball, let alone lined up to the target. The fear of being late is huge and often destroys even the most disciplined person's intentions, and stroke. It takes a great deal of training, and mental / emotional growth to be able to play tennis well, to get the racquet out of alignment, and keep it there, until the precise moment when coming into alignment has the maximum benefit in speed, connection and targeting. One way to define greatness is this: the best player is the player who is closest to being late, without being late. That last moment squaring is the primary source of power (other sources of power are the racquet flex, the bounce / string compression and incoming speed of ball. i.e. Different racquets and strings respond differently).

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## **Tennis Tip:**

### **Practicing Serves**

In a Wall Street Journal article back around the time of the US Open, I read about how many players, especially women, on the Pro Tour, don't really practice their serve that much. They see the serve, as a lot of us do, as a way to get the point started. Then you can hit groundstrokes, or volleys, and win the point that way. This was contrasted to the elite servers in the game (both Men and Women), who spend a great deal of time practicing their serve.

**Our Challenge.** I think a lot of us, because we are not tall, or young, or flexible or fast, plus the fact we seldom "win" the point with the serve (ace, unreturnable delivery) think that the main point of our serve is just to get the point started. This self-defeating belief is really damaging our ability to maximize our potential on the court.

**Size.** As a young teenager, my dad took me to watch pro tournaments. I remember watching Rossie Cassals, who was barely 5 feet tall, playing out at Golden Gate Fields, bombing big serve after big serve. I even modeled my motion, in my mind's eye, after hers. Several years ago, a relatively unknown Swede, Thomas Johanson, served everyone off the court (including the #1 player in the world, Marat Safin) at the Australian Open, winning the tournament easily. He was maybe 6 feet tall, rather small for an elite male server, and ace machine. Yet there he was, trophy in hand.

**Excellent technique** over comes a lot of physical handicaps (like height and athletic ability), so we need not throw in the towel on being an excellent server. In fact, when the serve doesn't end the point, it often sets up the shot that does. **Sever + 1** is the most devastating shot on the pro tour right now. The next shot after the serve, because the serve has caused damage to the opponent to start the point. Open up the court, finish with the next shot.

Remember, the serve is the only stroke where you get a free, unencumbered (except by your own limitations) shot at your opponent. The serve starts every point in tennis. It is the most important shot. Practice!

**Serving Strategy (What to Practice)**

**For Doubles,** practice serving to the backhand. Same is true for second serves. Same when playing lefty, go to the backhand (other side).

**For Singles,** first serve out wide to open the court. Hit serve + 1 into the open court. Second serve to backhand.

**Second serves:** remember you are starting the point. You want to start the point to your advantage, so "I have to start the point, I have to get it in" is a bad strategy. Find a way, spin, placement so that the second serve still leaves you in charge. Double faults aren't bad, losing points is bad. A strong second serve (practice this) with a few double faults is much better than a weak second serve and losing most of the points. While it is extreme, I have twice seen someone double fault six times in a single game and hold serve. Holding is the goal, not just getting the serve in.

**Practice Tips:**

- Several times a week. A few repetitions often, is better for learning than a lot of repetitions once.
- 30-40 serves, you don't have to serve for an hour. In fact, you don't want to. 10-15 mins. Is fine. Just show up early to your game. Too many serves can put too much stress on the arm. Including warm up (8-10 serves please), you probably hit 45-50 serves in two sets of doubles. That is a good number to practice.
- Go slow, focus on technique. Only go as fast as you can do it right.
- Over swinging with poor technique is the biggest cause of injury on the serve.
- Don't worry about aiming. Rhythm and motion come first. Aiming develops with practice. Let it flow. This is why warm up is important. You don't want to aim too soon, you won't achieve flow.
- Once you feel the groove, then start working on placement. And ultimately, deception (with the same move, different targets). Deception is the elite weapon, and with deception, you don't have to have a HUGE serve to hit aces.
- There are four weapons: speed, spin, placement, deception. Spend some time on each skill.
- The radar gun is seductive. Don't get seduced by speed, or over effort. A smooth, efficient motion produces the fastest shot anyway (i.e. try hitting it easy, and smooth, and get ready for a surprise). And smooth is harder to read.
- Practice tossing by serving. Practicing just your toss is a waste of time, because it needs to fit in with the serve. Practice the whole motion to work on the individual parts. Seems harder, but it is the only way that works.
- Serve and move into position for the return. Wide if you serve wide, central if you hit up the middle. Serve+1

## Junior Clinic Schedule Spring 2018 March 19<sup>th</sup> – June 1<sup>st</sup>

The 2018 Spring Junior Clinics will begin the week of **March 19<sup>th</sup>** and will continue thru the week of **May 28<sup>th</sup>** The 10-week program will be led by **Head Pro Patric Hermanson**. **Summer 2018** schedule will be out soon!

The Level I and II classes will be taught using aspects of the USTA 10 and Under Development Program.

<u>Level</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Time(s)</u>	<u>One day/week</u>	<u>Two Days</u>
<b>I</b>	<b><u>Lil' Ones</u></b>	<b>Tues/Thurs 3:15-4pm</b> <i>The Lil' Ones class is for the always adorable 4-6 year olds</i>	<b>\$140*</b>	<b>\$220*</b>
<b>II</b>	<b><u>Future Stars Group</u></b>	<b>Tuesdays 4-5:30pm</b> <i>The Future Stars Group is for our 7 to 10 year old players.</i>	<b>\$255*</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>III</b>	<b><u>Tennis Development</u></b>	<b>Thursdays 4-5:30pm</b> <i>In the Tennis Development Group is for beginning through intermediate players ages 11 thru 14</i>	<b>\$255*</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>IV</b>	<b><u>Tournament Training</u></b>	<b>Wednesdays 4:30-6:30pm</b> <i>The Tournament Training Group is an invitation only class</i>	<b>\$325*</b>	<b>N/A</b>

\***Non-members** should add \$25 (Lil' Ones, only \$15).