



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

2019 Holiday Season

Reindeer Games

Our winter tennis social will be held on Sunday, December 15th this year from 2-4 pm. We'll play a few rounds of tennis and share some holiday cheer on the Club deck. Just wine and snacks for this one, as order food with the weather so ify is not a good plan. Contact Keith or John Bockman if you would like to join us for a fun hit-a-round on the December 15th.

Monday Night Tennis

Monday Night Tennis is our tennis social hosted by Dennis Weil every Monday evening. As we go into the winter months, where we have to play under the lights, we are limited to 8-10 players per week. If you are interested in playing, contact Keith or Denis, and we can put you on the invite list. Denis does a great job of balancing the games, and keeping everyone in the rotation. If there isn't room this week, he does his best to get you in the following week.

Court One

Our beloved Court One has some cracks. You might have noticed. We have. The question is what to do.

Situation: Court One is the only court at Orindawoods that is on the ground, the actual hillside. All the other courts are on fill, or engineered soil. Highly compacted, sometimes 60-80 feet deep. Apparently, that makes the ground a lot more stable, because over 45 years we have had about a third of the problems on the other six courts, that we have had on Court One. Courts 2-6 have been rebuilt once in the history of the Club, Court One twice, and the most recently by 10 years, and it still has the most problems.

Solutions: We are looking into several possible solutions. Of course we can continue to patch it. The patches are great, but new cracks keep developing between the patches. We can tear it out, and start over (on the same lousy ground). We could try different surfaces (clay, AstroTurf and sand, mats).

We are very much in the exploration stage, but we want to solve the problem as best we can, within the monetary limits we have. The cost of solutions varies greatly, but none are cheap. Some are prohibitive.

We'd like to find a solution that addresses the core problem (the ground moving) and not just patches that are surrounded by new cracks within a year or two. We can't stop the ground from moving, but perhaps we could build a court that can adjust with the moving terrain.

Tennis Tips:

Effects, Not Side Effects

When I play a tennis ball, I often want to add certain effects to make the shot "more effective." Speed, spin, height, depth are all effects that I'm adding to the ball. I want to shape my stroke in a way that I get the desired effect.

Pool Scene

OWTC Pool Closing

The Orindawoods Tennis Club pool will be closing in late October. Look for the exact date on signs at the Club. It's been a great season. Thank you!

Holiday Hours:

The club is open every day, but the Pro Shop will be closed on Nov. 28 & 29 & Dec 24 & 25, 31 and Jan 1.

Weekly Lessons

Hit and Fit:

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

Friday 10:30-12 noon	\$20
Saturday 7:30-9 a.m.	\$20

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.

OW Jr. Championships

The OW Jr. Championships were held October 10/19-10/21. A lot of our junior members and junior program students played in the tournament. There were 70 participants from all over Contra Costa County and beyond playing in this event. Each month, a different club hosts one of these tournaments.

Thank you to all the members for giving up the Club's courts for a weekend, so we can grow the future of the game!

Court Washing

First and fourth Fridays of the month. 12-3 p.m. After the beginning of November, we will delegate the court washing to Mother Nature. We will continue to blow the courts every Monday and Friday (7:30 a.m.) through the winter.

Quote of the Month:

"The slower the ball, the quicker the feet. The faster the ball, the slower the hands."

But I don't want to have a stroke that gives me too many undesirable side effects. For example, if I am trying to spin the ball, but the shape of my stroke path is too forward, the ball will tend to bounce off, rather than spin or roll, and I will get more power and often more distance, with less spin and control than I intended. This was a side effect of a less desirable stroke.



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So when playing a stroke or shot, be very aware of what you are attempting to do, and what you want to leave out. Often we are so desperate to hit the ball, that we don't realize in lunging for the ball, we are adding a lot of "stuff" that we don't really want, and is often harmful.

We see this on the serve a lot. Say I want to hit up on the ball and create a topspin serve, a kicker. But in the process of setting that up, I toss the ball too far forward. I want to hit the ball, so I reach forward while I still try to do the effect I want, hitting up. The problem is, there is a side effect of too much forward, which makes the serve too flat, and go down into the net. I didn't stick to the stroke, the plan, to hit up, because I got distracted by the ball, and moved in an undesirable way.

Tennis is far more than making contact. We also want to hit it over the net, into the court, with a certain speed and spin, and have it land in a desired location. Add the effects you want, leave the rest out as much as possible.

In other words, be very conscious of your motivations when you go to play a ball. Have you slipped down into "OMG!!!! I just hit it!!!" or do you still have a plan somewhat related to doing well in the game? We often get what we want, so if you just want to make contact, if that is your primary goal, you will probably get that, but not much else (that is good).

One More Step

My teacher Doug often said that the hardest shot to hit in tennis was the slow, short ball with no pace. Very hard to control that ball, attack it, and keep it in. I've even given it a name, "The 3.5 sitter," because it is a shot that comes up in 3.5 tennis a lot. To move beyond 3.5, you need to master that shot. Most second serves in club tennis are 3.5 sitters, for example. When players get nervous, they often just push the ball back, in the middle of the court, with no pace. A 3.5 sitter.

At the USPTA convention, one of the best tips (see below) was that on a slow ball, you need to move your feet more, and on a fast ball, move your hands less. Let's add on to that very good idea.

When you are running up for a short ball (or wide for a wide ball), take one more step forward than you think you need, before you play the shot. The mistake we often make, either because we are afraid we won't get there, or we are so pumped to hit the weak ball, is to reach out and hit the ball. Our contact ends up being too soon. Reaching with our arms or racquet changes the angle of the racquet face, and we often miss the shot. Unless of course, we just push it back, another 3.5 sitter. A 3.5 singles match often looks like two players pushing the ball back and forth, hoping the other misses, because they are too afraid of missing to try to attack this "weak" (but deceptively difficult) shot.

If you could take one more step, and get up next to the ball, then you can execute your regular shot, not change the angle of your racquet face, and deal with the 3.5 sitter, move up to 4.0, and the rest will be history and endless autograph signings. The glory, the glory.

Interestingly enough, when we are forced to back up to hit a shot, hitting the ball at the first available place is usually about right. Going forward, the first available moment is too soon, and we reach and miss. The motivation to stroke is the same, but we position much better backing up.

So I would say, you are better off standing / positioning a little too close, than a little too far back. Especially when you are expecting a weak shot, like on a second serve return. Make sure you take that extra step. Good luck out there!

USPTA Convention Highlights

Last month Keith went to the USPTA World Conference in Las Vegas for four days of intense instruction on all sorts of issues having to do with tennis, tennis teaching and the tennis industry. Here are some of the highlights of the great instruction he received and wants to pass on to you!

Allen Fox

Sports psychologist Allen Fox talked about how to deal with the most common mental / emotional problems. It is almost always one of three problems: 1) anger, 2) discouragement, or 3) choking. He offered a working solution for each. First Allen's Golden Rule of Tennis: only do things that help you to you win (do your best). Only think thoughts that help you.

For example, getting angry almost always is a distraction and makes you play worse. People often get angry to deal with how nervous they are feeling. And it works. Anger clears out all other emotions. But it doesn't make you play better, only worse. Same for getting discouraged. Giving up may protect your ego a bit, but it isn't going to help you compete. Finally everyone chokes, but it seldom is fatal. What's important is what happens next. That's what really matters. Choke your second serve on game point? Do you serve better the next point, or get upset and fall apart? It's still deuce, after all. You are even. Fox stressed that everyone chokes, so get over it. Get on with the next point.

Edgar Giffenig

Perhaps the tip of the conference: The slower the ball, the more you need to move your feet, the faster the ball, the slower you need to move your hands.

Most easy shots are missed because we stop moving. Most difficult shots are missed because we over react with our hands. (see take one more step – see above).

Craig O'Shannessy

Craig talked about "Dirt Ball", playing on clay, and how that related to playing on hard courts, statistically. We all think the rallies are longer on clay, but the short answer is, there really isn't very much difference, men or women, on all the key statistics in tennis.

Since very few of us play on clay, I think the important take away is some key statistics about our game, on hard court or clay. Here are a few that might open some eyes:

1. About 70% of the points are four shots made or less. Slightly less for women.
2. Of all the factors we consider (rally length, winners, unforced errors, first serve percentage, etc ... he looked at 16 different factors) the #1 correlation to winning was the player that won the most short points (0-4) points. Tennis is a first strike game. Next highest correlation was first serve points won, and first serve return points won, then baseline points won and less forced errors. Next is second serve return points won, and second serve points won. These are the key areas if you want to win a match.
3. The most frequent rally length in pro tennis, hard court or clay is... how many shots made???? ONE. The serve is made and the return is not made. 28% of the time. The second most frequent outcome in men's tennis is a serve made, and a return made, the next shot is missed (2 shots made – 19%). In women's it is the serve made, the return made, and the serve + 1 made, and the next shot missed (3 shots made). Then that is reversed in Men and Women's for the next most likely. Then four shots. Rallies of 9 shots or more only happen about 4% of the time. Winning tennis is not about long rallies. They just make good memories.
4. It all adds up to make your first two shots at least. Serve and serve+1, or return, and return+1. Make them! If you are in a strong position, attack, force an error. If you are in a weak position, get it back, play for their error, but make the first 2 shots.
5. All this is to say, why do we rally for practice? Practice should mirror the game, and the game is "first strike." (even on clay, especially on hard court). Serve, return, serve+1, return+1. These are the shots to work on. So the least practiced shot in tennis???? The return. Next? The serve. Rallying, all day long?? We have it completely backwards. Fix your practice.

Emma Doyle

Emma talked about teaching young kids, and the progressions from 4-6 year-olds (red ball) to 7-8 year-olds (orange ball) to 9-10 (green ball) and then 11 and up, yellow ball (adult). The progressions were very interesting, and not only involved strokes, but also tactics and strategy. This also applies to adult learners, I believe.

1) At the beginning stage, we are just trying to make contact, and tactically, get it in, and maybe be able to direct the shot to one side or the other (2.5-3.0). A useful drill is to call out which side of the court you are hitting the ball too. The focus is completely on me. 2) At the next level (3.5), we think of the court as four squares (left and right, short and deep). We try to place the ball in different squares, aware of what would be tougher for our opponent. 3) The next level we divide the court into thirds (4.0+). On a tough shot, we aim for the middle third, on a weaker shot, one of the outside thirds (very similar to what Craig O'Shannessy said above: first serve return get it back, second serve return attack). At this level, we are not only aware of ourselves, and our opponent, but what shots are best to hit based on what we receive. 4) In the last stage, we divide into 9 squares, and try to avoid #5, right in the middle (4.5+). We can vary the height and the depth, as well as the speed and the spin. Now we become more instinctive, feeling how to use the court in relation to our skills, our opponent, what is possible, what is not.

Jeff Salzenstein

Jeff talked about blended learning. That is, combining tennis videos we watch on the internet with lessons we get on the court. Jeff argued that instead of whining about how kids (and adults) only want to be on their phone, make the phone part of the lesson.

Much like this newsletter, we can get good information from outside sources (not on the court), but without the feedback and interaction you get from a teacher, learning can be slow. Knowing what to do is the first 10% of learning. Then you have to figure it out. On the other hand, having good outside resources helps speed up the learning process when you are working with your coach. Visual images are particularly powerful in the learning process. Talk with your coach about videos that are good to watch, model and learn from.

Rosie Bareis (from the nearby Claremont Resort in Berkeley)

Rosie gave a talk on doubles based on two basic ideas:

1. Where you hit tells you where to go
2. What you receive tells you what to hit.

For example, if you hit low to the net person's feet, you move forward ("low you go"). If you hit high, you stay back ("high you die").

If you receive an angle shot, you tend to hit an angle shot back. That is the easiest shot to hit, and the one that protects you best from their return. If they lob you, it's easiest to lob it back (unless you can play an overhead). If you receive the ball in the middle, it's best to play the ball back in the middle. High balls high, low balls low.

Don Henson

Don gave some interesting perspectives on the way the game is played and taught. He thinks that clay court players learn to play, not to hit. The ball always comes back. You have to play. Hard court players learn how to hit. They are shot makers, make big shots. But they don't learn how to play the point, just make the shot, b/c on hard court, the ball often doesn't come back. He said that in the last fifty years, only 11 men who didn't grow up on clay have made it to the top 10. Only 2 women. That is pretty amazing.

Sarah Stone

Sarah made an interesting observation about juniors. She said that for practice, girls want to drill, don't want to play matches. Boys want to play matches, don't really want to drill. I've witnessed this at Indian Wells too on the practice courts at a bit older age, with the women working out hard with a coach drilling, and the men playing practice matches. Here at the Club, women do more training, men tend to just play (unless they really want/need to improve part of their game). An interesting observation. You mean you can't teach everyone the same????

Roger Crawford

Roger, who overcame pretty severe birth defects (only has a couple fingers) to become a good tennis player, gave an incredibly inspirational talk. Here are a few gems:

- The difference between fear and anxiety. Fear is an understandable response to a situation. It is present based. Anxiety is an anticipation of a negative event whether it happens or not. No evidence to support it will happen. It is future based, with little connection to reality.
- Consistency is more important than perfection
- Mindset is important. We rarely perform better than we think we can.
- Everyone faces adversity. Challenges are inevitable. Defeat is optional.
- Where are you coming from is important (what is your past)? The problem with the past for most people is: Forgetting what they should remember, and remembering what they should forget.

Andre Agassi

Andre spoke about a broad range of topics about tennis, and coaching, and the interaction of the coach and the player. A couple of highlights:

- His advice to 2.5 women (and others). Hit higher. The net is 3 feet high. There is 70,000 feet above that of useable airspace, use it.
- He called Bollettieri's, the tennis academy where he grew up, "Lord of the Flies with forehands and backhands." It was designed to bring out the animal in the students. Survival of the fittest. He survived, barely... read his book.
- His basic game plan was to slow things down on his side of the net, and speed things up on their side of the net. Buy time for yourself with positioning and shot selection, take time away from your opponent.
- Don't play better than you have to. In other words, do what you have to do to win, but don't try to play better than you have to play, because you will make too many errors and do worse. (Law of diminishing returns). "I'm from Vegas, 51% is good. Keep the lights on, let everyone in."
- "Highest compliment I can say about [my wife] Steph. 'Within a minute and a half of talking to her, you'll just see her and forget everything she has accomplished.'"