



# Orindawoods Tennis News

October 2022

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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*

**October 21-23**

## Orindawoods Junior Championships

The Orindawoods Junior Championships will be held October 21-23 at the Club. ALL COURTS will be used that weekend, starting at 4 p.m. on Friday, all day Saturday, and most of the day on Sunday (depending on weather). Kids from all over Contra Costa County and beyond will compete. They are appreciative that Orindawoods is letting them play on our courts for the weekend. If you have a junior that would like to play, you can register on:

[https://topdoglive.com/pages/tournaments/tournament\\_list.asp](https://topdoglive.com/pages/tournaments/tournament_list.asp).

Registration closes on Sunday, 10/16 at midnight, so sign up this week! Several of our junior program kids will play, to be sure.

## Thanks For a Great Social Season

We had our last Twilight of the season on Sunday, October 2nd. It was a great summer of four twilights, the Just Because and Tulip Parties, and about twenty nights of Monday Team Tennis. Plus Pickleball Thursdays. A very active summer social season. I hope you were able to join us for at least some of the fun.

We will have one last event, the Reindeer Games, in December TBD. Be sure to join us for some holiday cheer.

## Lessons With Erik

Head Pro Erik Oehlschlager is settling in, doing great work with the junior program, and growing his private lesson book. Erik teaches Monday through Saturday, and has privates available in the morning hours, approximately 9-12 noon. There are still spots available if you would like to get back in the swing of things, and work on your game.

Like all of us, I've been getting to know Erik over the past several weeks. It's been great talking tennis, stroke production, teaching, and planning programs. Erik has a great vision for the future here at Orindawoods. And a plan and energy to help juniors and adults improve. Erik teaches privates, groups, doubles, drills, juniors and adults. For a lesson, contact Erik at [Erik@orindawoodstennis.com](mailto:Erik@orindawoodstennis.com).

**October 31<sup>st</sup>**

## Orindawoods Pool Closing Date

The Orindawoods Tennis Club pool will close for the season at the end of October. The weather has been great, and there is still three weeks to get in a few more splashes. Hope you have had a great summer in the pool. The pool will reopen in early May. The news is not all sad, as we are planning to do some work on the pool this winter, replacing the heating system, to make the pool better than ever. Stay tuned.

**ETD Keith's Trip to the USPTA Convention**

## Lessons From New Orleans

I spent a week in New Orleans (9/18 to 9/25) at the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA) World Conference. It was a great week, with amazing dining, culture and some great

## 2022 Club Rates

**Tennis Lessons with Keith & Erik:**

½ hour private	\$45
1 hour private	\$80

**Club Dues:** \$140 / month

**Guests:** \$10 (1 visit / week). Pay Station located by the Pro Shop door.

## Weekly Lessons

<b>Ladies' clinic:</b>	Tues 9:30	\$10
<b>Men's clinics:</b>	Thurs 9:30	\$10

## Hit and Fit

<b>Wednesday 11:30-1</b>	1.5 hours
<b>Friday 11:30-1</b>	1.5 hours

The cost is \$20 / class for tennis and TRX

## Ball Machine

Ball Machine Club	\$110 /year
Ball Machine / hour	\$8

- Ball Machine Club runs thru 3/30/23
- Reserve Court 3 to use the machine.
- Reservations are for **1 hour**.
- Pay using Pay Station / credit card
- iPhone app: **Like My Drill**

## Racquet Stringing

**by Patric Hermanson.**

Patric is continuing in his fine tradition of being an expert racquet stringer. Patric picks up and drops off racquets on Tuesdays and Fridays. Put some zip back your game, get a resting!

## Pickleball Playdays

We play Pickleball on Thursdays at 5:30 on court one. Let Keith or John Bockman know if you are interested in joining.

## Greystone Parking

The Club's overflow parking is on Greystone Terrace, across the street. It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that we park on just one side (right side going up) and do not block the emergency vehicles. Thx!

## Quote of the Month:

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony."

— Mahatma Gandhi

conference sessions and learning opportunities. Plus, a chance to connect with other pros, and get the pulse of the tennis industry.

In addition, as a member of the USTA Leadership Team (Gang of 51) as NorCal Delegate, I met with the USPTA Executive Director to try to help patch up an issue between the two organizations. It is very strange, but enjoyable, to be an “insider” after all these years of considering myself an outsider, even rebel, when it comes to USTA. At this point, I’m happy and honored to serve, and to try to make tennis better for more people in the US and around the world. I’m running for a second two-year term this fall.

As I like to do when I attend these events, I want to share with you a bit about the talks, what I learned, and some ideas that you might find useful for your game. So here we go, a “highlights” show:

**New Orleans:** shrimp. OMG, they don’t grow shrimp like that back home. Tugboat Charlie, my sister’s partner, lives in Louisiana, and the shrimp alone is why he will never leave (not to mention, cost of living compared to our fine state of California). I have never eaten so much shrimp in my life. It is back on the diet now, because that shrimp didn’t come alone. They usually brought along amazing sauces, grits, red beans and rice, and an accompanying Sazerac. Cheers!

### **Mackie**

The first talk was by Serena’s long-time fitness coach and trainer (since 2007), Mackie. Much like Gil Reyes was like a father to Andre Agassi, Serena called Mackie her second father. His training techniques were truly amazing and revolutionary, but clearly the love, passion, and dedication he gives to his students is what sets him apart as a coach, mentor and friend. The connection, care and concern, plus tough love, is palpable. He trains all kinds of athletes, in all kinds of sports, from boxing to tennis, and many, many champions. His goal is to increase the function of the joints, and he spoke on how he helped Serena with her serve (the best serve in women’s tennis for years). Mackie used a three-step approach:

1. **Prepare** (warming up with resistance bands to activate the shoulder)
2. **Resist** (weights: for the serve, small, weighted balls) to increase strength, balance, and technique “throwing.”
3. **Assist** (used bungee cords to teach the student when to fire or release the movement)

Great stuff from a master, and an inspirational leader and coach. What a start to the convention!

### **Reservation Cancelations**

If you do have a reservation and are not going to use it, please cancel your reservation. Please, please, please...

This is especially true for courts and times that are in high demand or have multiple uses (like Court One with pickleball and Court Three with the ball machine).

In general, there are too many reservations that are not being used and not being canceled. Please remember you may want a court someday, and one is open, but you don’t know it, because someone didn’t cancel.

Thank you!

### **Jorge Capestany**

Jorge for years has been the master of drills for groups of players. Teachers who teach groups of players have been using his drills for years, and he has some good ones that keep people moving and playing. His central idea is that to get better we need to play a lot of balls, repetition, and experience, so he focuses on **the number of contacts per hour** and keeping everyone interested (multiple drills so the students learn different skills and don’t get bored) and engaged. Tons of innovative ideas and drills to keep a group of people busy and learning on the court. And having fun!

### **Sarah Stone**

Sarah focused on ball control and placement, the keys to tennis in her opinion. If you can’t control the ball, you have no chance to execute a strategy or tactics (see below in tennis tip). The better your shot, placement, speed, spin, deception, the more you can force errors, which is the secret to success. You can’t hit winners all the time, and you don’t want to make a lot of errors, but if you can keep giving your opponent tough shots. Some of the drills were “rally in the alley”, which we do in the Men’s and Women’s clinics and hitting target areas. Her key point: if you can’t make the ball travel straight, all you can hit is cross court, and that is easy to predict and play against. So, a focus on making the down-the-line shot. Good, practical stuff. Simple, but highly effective. Not all improvement is complicated.

### **Jim Loehr**

A man that changed my life, as a person and a professional. Read his first book (of eighteen, some best sellers) in my twenties, *Athletic Excellence, Mental Toughness Training for Sport*. One of the five books that changed my life. I have seen Jim speak probably 20 times over the years and read all 18 books. His training tools changed me from an emotionally out of control teenager to a mentally tough athlete. Like all of us, I wasn’t a natural at being mentally tough, but I could learn.

A slight aside, but my current definition of a natural — right out of Jim’s thinking is: “someone who has practiced a lot.” A concept I didn’t understand when first facing pressure and competition in my youth. I just thought I should be able to deal with it, be tough, and then, when I struggled, I figured that there were people that were just born mentally tough, and I wasn’t one of them. Both these ideas proved to be wrong and unhelpful (to say the least).



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### Tennis Club Directory Online Version

On the website under  
"Membership Services" there is  
a page "[Tennis Directory](#)" that  
has a link to the tennis club  
address book. You need to sign-  
in to access this information.

### Silvercreek HOA Management

Accounting and billing  
questions, contact:  
916-877-7793 or  
[accounting@sc-manage.com](mailto:accounting@sc-manage.com)

**In the summation of an amazing fifty-year career**, Jim talks about how the brilliant competitive brain is not normal. That the mentally tough athlete has a very abnormal response to pressure, stress and strain. They find challenge and inspiration in situations where 99.9% of the population just lose it. And his great news, is that it can be learned, but it takes hard work.

His current favorite example is of course, Nick Kyrgios, who responds quite normally to stress. He gets upset, he acts out, he protects his ego by blaming others, by checking out. All very normal human responses, which unfortunately lead to failure. He just looks like such a huge jerk, because most other tour players handle it a bit better. They're abnormal. All this song and dance, smoke and mirrors, is to be protecting his ego from the intense pain of choking and failure.

But Kyrgios is really working on his mental game, because in those calm moments, off the court, when you reflect on your career, he knows that his behavior is self-destructive and doesn't take him to where he wants to be. He has the physical talent to be #1, and few can say that, yet he is nowhere near, ... yet. Stay tuned.

**Which leads us to Jim's second main point**, it is hard to change behavior patterns once they are ingrained. i.e., it's best to never learn bad habits in the first place, and if you do, junk them as fast as possible. Nick has done amazingly well and improved his results, but it is so hard to change, and we all can face a "perfect storm" of pressure and circumstance, where we just lose it. This is the world of competitive athletics, and why these people are so amazing, so abnormal. For every Federer, there are millions of people, that don't respond in that calm, inspired way. And Fed's skills were learned, trained, reinforce, and developed. Someone like Alcatraz at 19 is almost a miracle (very intentionally and well coached by people that knew what they were doing). Almost, because the truth is, we can all learn these "abnormal" skills, if we desire to change our "normal" responses to stress to more helpful ones.

**The follow-up lesson** was that these abnormal, awesome competitors had countless failure and breakdowns on the way to mental toughness (we just didn't witness them), and can still have bad days, but keep coming back for more. So, give yourself a break, but come back for more. Persistence -- in the face of embarrassment and shame -- not perfection.

**The Bull's Eye.** If you think of a bull's eye target, with rings, they're four levels of response to a competitive / stressful situation. The four rings are:

**Outer ring** (farthest from mental toughness): withdrawing, giving up, tanking, pretending not to care (we see Nick do this sometimes, as an example). Checking out (hey, it's honest self-defense, but not helpful because you quit or give up -- never getting to your goals that way).

**Third ring: anger.** Getting frustrated and "losing it" is another form of distraction and ego defense, where you are not really in there anymore, and so it is not your (ego) fault if you fail. And you do fail. It's a bit better than tanking, because you do still care, but can't handle it, checking out in rage.

Like many players, I really struggled with this one in my junior tennis days (I turned my anger inwards), as does Nick (both inwards and outwards). The screaming at his coach's box, is just one example of him trying to deal with the pain of caring, intense challenge and potential failure (winning is never a sure thing, a lock, or a given... even when you sandbag in league tennis).

**The second ring**, the closest to mental toughness, flow, and the ideal performance state, is surprisingly: **choking**. Most people feel choking is the absolute worst, and is a terrible, painful feeling that we try to escape by guess what: tanking, not caring, withdrawing or by anger (override the choking feeling with a stronger, anger outburst, that doesn't hurt the ego so much).

But step back, choking just means that you care, you want to do well. The only problem is, your focus is just a bit off, on the result and not the process. But you care, and you must care to get to your goals, and where you want to be. You're almost there, even with all the pain. Don't let the pain fool you into giving up.

**The Sweet Spot, the Middle:** If you can focus properly in the moment, stay in the process, focus on being, and not doing, you can find the zone, flow, the ideal performance state. If you can let go of the good times and the bad times, the good shots and bad shots, the good line calls and the bad line calls, the highs and lows, let them come and go (as they always do), then you can reach the zone, flow, and the ideal performance state. Calmness with energy. It's a state of being, not a question of doing.

**The Overall Secret** is to keep focusing on the response you want, and building the neural pathways to that response, and not strengthening the neural pathways for the negative response. It's like when you are learning the serve, each time you do the correct form, you are getting better (even if you miss), each time you give in to just pushing the ball in, you are reinforcing that and getting worse. The future is now, start doing it right every time, and not give into temptation, because that builds bad habits, and under stress, you will be confused, and often go to the most reinforced habit.

**Sixteen-Second Cure.** Jim is famous for giving players the sixteen-second cure (look it up on YouTube, good video) of what you do between points to manage your focus and emotions. 1) End the last point in your mind (celebrate wins or turn away from errors). 2) Physical recovery, breathe, return to calm, lower heart rate, focus (look at strings on your racquet), project confidence (racquet head up), 3) plan the next point (mental rehearsal), 4) pre shot (serve or return) rituals to activate the body and mind to play the next point.

**Finally,** over the years, Jim's work has really focused on the spiritual element, and character. It is having and learning good character, based on empowering beliefs that gets you in the ideal performance state. Not everyone can be a tennis champion, very few can, but all of us can develop in to being good human beings with high moral character. The secret to change is putting your energy into where you want to go. And starving ideas and behaviors you want to get rid of. Don't give those bad habits one more second of your time, energy or thought, focus on where you want to go. The future is now.

So much great material from a career of 50 years. Jim was inducted into the USPTA Hall of Fame later in the conference, and I was there. In a very special moment for me, I was able to thank him personally. So awesome!

**AJ Pant** (racquet sports director for over 300 clubs) talked about "Tennis in A Pickle," or the interaction between pickleball and tennis from a club business and management perspective. There were some interesting facts from the club industry: like before the pandemic, the average age of the pickleball player was 62, it is 38 now. Clearly everyone is getting younger playing pickleball. :-) Or, pickleball is now appealing to younger people too.

Clubs get very little programming revenue from pickleball (events fees, lesson fees, social fees, playdays etc... tennis is the second highest per capita sport in terms of program income in the club industry) but there is evidence for membership numbers are increasing to play pickleball.

Individual pickleball players also play more often than tennis players. Pickleball works better with staffed events, play days, drop ins -- not lessons -- but supervised play at set times. Tennis runs more on its own.

There are not really leagues in pickleball yet, more just drop-in play. And pickleball players tend to play more with anyone, where tennis players are more particular about the level, but this is changing. Sadly.

**Mark Kovacs** is the industry leader in fitness and physical training of players. His focus for this presentation was on expanding a player's "circle of comfort" or basically, how far they could move, and still produce high quality shots. By working on the split step, and the size of the steps moving to the ball (hint: larger), Mark was able to demonstrate how he could increase a player's "circle of comfort." It was a very compelling talk, that I will be discussing more in this space in the future.

Basically, what slows us down the most, is making, and then adjusting for, mistakes. Mistakes in movement, force us to take small adjustment steps -- too soon and too many -- and we spend a lot of time on the ground not moving much. Friction with the ground slows us down.

**Solution:** If we split a bit later (see below) and then turn and move only when we know where we are going, we can take bigger steps, cover more ground (we're much quicker when we are in the air than on the ground), and spend less time adjusting. All that squeaky shoes stuff that we have heard is so good for years, is actually making us slower.

Mark's final point was the split step was just a reaction to the ball, so just let players just react (be in the air and then react in how they turn in the air and land). The next step or two is a measured response, to get appropriate into position. Interestingly enough, the slower you go, the more precise and accurate your steps to the ball, the fewer mistakes in positioning you make, and thus the quicker you are. I know, tennis... it's soooooo counter intuitive. ☺

**Walker Sahag** talked about developing the ATP Backhand. She spoke about the history of tennis, how we first went from linear swings (Evert, BJK, Connors) to vertical /angular swings (Borg, Vilas). To get one, vertical, you had to compromise the other, linear, or vice versa. Now we have transcended to a hand / shoulder based, axis of rotation (Federer, Nadal, et al) whereby rotating the arm in the shoulder around a relatively fixed hand position, we get both linear and angular action on the ball, and don't have to compromise (thus, more power, spin and control).

The backhand is starting to catch up to the amazing power of the ATP Forehand model, which is dominating tennis. Like Mark Kovacs, Walker knows you must start with the feet, with movement, with balance, and proper footwork. Again, more on this in the upcoming months, but she had this amazing device, where she put a weight on the butt cap



**Tim Mattek** spoke about preparing the junior player for better dealing with the mental, emotional, and spiritual challenges of playing tennis. Tim is the father of former #1 doubles player Bethanie Mattek-Sands. Tim warned that a focus on “what is wrong,” or on “what needs improving,” can derail the learning process. “Be aware of the trap where fixating on problems triggers thoughts, emotions and actions that reinforce limiting beliefs” (i.e., “I’m no good,” “stupid,” or “I suck”). Players need to be present (in the present moment) to learn and improve, not be weighed down by judgement and evaluation, and not focus on results, past or future. If they focus on what is wrong, rather than on playing and performing, they get “stuck in problems they can’t shake,” and “stuck in outcomes they can’t reach.”

### Tennis Tip:

**Focus is so often the key to success or failure.** Of course, the two greatest tennis tips: “watch the ball,” and “move your feet,” are deeply involved in focus. In some ways, focus is reminding yourself what you are likely to forget. In other words, we don’t have to remind ourselves about the things our attention is naturally drawn to. For example, hitting the ball, or winning. Or making a shot. It is how to get to those goals, in the process of making that shot, or match play, that we can get distracted, often by the outcome (the goal itself), and not focus on the parts that make that goal become a reality.

**A Couple of Questions for Focus.** Outside of the process of playing the ball, there are focus points that have to do with position / preparation, or tactics. Today I offer a couple of focus questions that can help you with the match play, as opposed to simply playing the ball, though they are clearly linked, and our focus must shift back and forth between the two.

a) **The split step** is often discussed and debated, as to when do you do it, what does it look like, etc... there was a lot of discussion of that in New Orleans. The best description I have found is this: you want to hop up in the air, preparing to land on two feet, wide apart, and be in the air when you can recognize which way your opponent's shot is going to go. Since the ball must leave their strings and travel at least 5 feet to really see this, I probably want to start hopping about the time they make contact, so that I'm unweighted ("in the air" - a great skiing term) when I need to shift my direction and pursue the ball. The rationale or reason for this, is simply: you want to be able to move as soon as you can see which direction you want to go. But not before. The thing that slows us down the most, is moving too soon, and having to correct for inaccurate guesses. (BTW, all guesses are mistakes b/c there is no way to guess the exact spot of the next contact point, we have to wait and see. There are no short cuts that work...just self-delude).

hitting a forehand in the deuce court, it is very likely the ball is going to go crosscourt. Whereas if they were hitting a backhand in the deuce court (middle of the court), it is much more likely it will go straight ahead, or even towards the alley. (See diagram). We should adjust our position (or the position of our team) to deal with these most likely shots and do our best on the rest. So, in the example, if the serve goes to the forehand, both the server and the net person should move more to the right, while a serve to the BH (in the middle) is going to see balls more played to the left (the net player wouldn't have to move much, but the server should clearly be in the middle (especially when you consider lobs, which would go over the net player's head).

If you are not preparing from those areas, on a great to decent serve, then you are doing yourself a big disservice.

Naturally, the weaker the shot from the server, and the better the positioning and technique of the receiver, the more court areas the player can hit that ball into.

That being said, the numbers still pretty much work out to 75%-80% of the shots follow this pattern. And the return mistakes go way up when the returner tries to change from the "easy" target.

Consider this: 30% of the serves in tennis are not returned. So, a lot of returners are trying to hit shots that are too difficult, or they can't make, way too much of the time. 30%... ouch! That means you have to win 71% of the 70% that remains to break even, more to come out ahead.

**The second question** we should bring into focus when we are playing the game, has to do with the "sending phase", and that is:

**#2 Where can I hit the ball the best?** A little-known fact, but the better the player, the more often they hit their best shot. Kind of stands to reason, or make sense, since you are a better player when you are playing better shots. So interestingly, where I can hit my best shot is usually "across the body" at least to some degree. Just like above. Of course, that has implications, if the opponent knows that too, but we'll discuss that more a bit later.

First, let's look at how points are won, and matches decided. The outcome of the point can either be a winner, a forced error (an error my opponent caused me to make) and unforced error (a "dumb" mistake, missing a shot I can make). Both winners and forced errors come from a shot that is too strong for me to handle, either because I don't have enough time, it is placed in a very tough spot, the spin on the ball, or the deception (I couldn't tell where it was going, thus contributing to the first three issues: time, placement, spin).

It varies a bit (men/women, clay, grass, hard court surface), but roughly 1/3 of the points end in winners, 1/3 in forced errors and 1/3 in unforced errors. If 1/3 are winners, and 1/3 are unforced errors, the "swing" vote in match play is forcing errors. How can I force more errors than my opponent, without increasing the number of errors I make (taking too many chances, i.e. going for winners)?

So, I want to play the best shot I can, to try to force errors, or hit winners. Often when I play the ball well, I don't know which it will be, winner or forced error, but I'm hoping for one of those. Just play the best you can.

So offensive play is effective, if you play good shots (i.e., hit the best shot you can). Hitting the best shot you can doesn't mean "making a tough, risky shot," it is hitting the best shot you can, as often as you can. The shot that you can make the most often, that is the most effective. So, the relevant question is, "**Given the ball is here, where can I play the ball the best** (more likely to force an error, or maybe be a winner)."

Of course, hitting your best shot means that you make fewer unforced errors. I often say, only hit shots you can make. The obvious, but often overlooked answer. So, in hitting an effective shot, you are also tending to defense by not making unforced errors. Woo hoo!!! Offense is defense.

Positioning (answering the question: "Where is their shot likely to go?") certainly helps mitigate their "strong shots." I have a better chance if I'm ready and in the right spot, but also helps me send back a stronger shot, forcing more errors.

So, positioning and shot selection are both offense and defense, because if I'm "where the ball is most likely to go," and "I'm hitting the best shot I'm likely to make" I'm going to be able to force more errors, hit more winners, and defend better by making fewer errors (As Sarah Stone discussed in her talk). These two questions, if answered in the best possible way, give me the best chance for improving my game by improving my match-play focus.

Good luck out there!