



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

New Associate Pro

Jennifer Conway

We are happy to announce we have a new Associate Tennis Pro at the Club, Jen Conway. Jen grew up in the Fresno area, played college tennis at UC Irvine before having a successful career in business and sales. Her family has moved to Orinda and after a house remodeling project is ready to jump on the courts and teach some tennis. Jen has extensive experience teaching from her junior and college days, plus a wealth of experience from playing 4.5 and now 5.0 USTA tennis. Jen will be assisting Patric in the junior program, and is available for private lessons in the midday during the week. She loves to coach doubles, and help people to improve their positioning, anticipation and shot selection. Jen is a big hitter, has great strokes and can clearly help you improve your game. Jen and her husband Mike Conway have two kids. Jen loves tennis and can't wait to help others, juniors and adults, to learn to play our beloved game better. You can contact Jen through her e-mail, jenniferlynconway@gmail.com. Welcome Jen!

The Levels of Cool

When I was teaching recently, I came upon an idea: cool never loses. Here is what I mean. Tennis is a fine motor skill sport. Fractions of an inch, one or two degrees on the racquet face, thousandths of a second, make huge differences in how your shots go for you.

In fact, I hesitate to tell you this, but if you tilt your racquet 1 degree higher (almost unperceivable to the human eye) on a medium speed shot, the ball will land six feet farther on the other side of the net, than if it was pointed 1 degree lower. That means, 2-3 degrees, and your shot is in or out. Or in the net. The margins of error are ridiculously small. Don't panic, take a deep breath, stay cool and read on.

Human beings are amazing that they can even play this game. And yet, an "uncoordinated" beginner who can hit the ball back and forth a couple of times is really doing something quite amazing. They are far from uncoordinated, just maybe not as skillful as someone who has played much longer. And so, anyone can learn, and enjoy tennis.

Cool vs. Choking. When we are cool, when we are in the flow, when we are in the zone, everything happens as it should. Our fine motor skills are at the top of their game. We are coordinated. When we get tight, when we are choking, when we are "up tight," our muscles get stiff, or they over react, and we try too hard. Our fine motor skills don't work as well, certainly not at top levels. In a game were the margins are so small, even a 10-20% drop off in our coordination is going to be significant, not to mention those horrible days when you are so nervous you don't feel like you remember how to play at all.

Roger vs. Djokovic at Wimbledon 2019. One of the greatest matches ever. The whole world pulling for Roger. Roger playing fantastically, taking it to #1 Novak, except in the tie-breakers, and that chance to serve it out late in the fifth set. What happened there? After all, Roger is Mr. Cool.

2020 Lesson Rates

(same as 2019)

Keith & Patric

1/2 hour private	\$45
1 hour private	\$80

Jennifer

1/2 hour private	\$40
1 hour private	\$75

Nonmembers add \$5

Junior Clinic Pricing: see page 4

Weekly Lessons

Hit and Fit:

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

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

Register by e-mailing Keith

Tuesday Ladies' Clinic:

Tuesdays at 9:30	\$5
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Thursday Men's Clinic:

Thursdays at 9:30	\$5
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The men's and women's clinics are drop-in.

Security

In light of the recent car break-ins, we have installed more cameras and are in the process of getting 24/7 video surveillance of the parking lot, and hopefully a license plate reader.

Please remember we are only a target if there are items in the car to steal. Please leave nothing in your car (including the trunk).

Quote of the Month:

"Mentally tough competitors do not play well under pressure.... Nobody plays well when they're feeling the pressure – not even the superstars. The difference is that skillful competitors play well in pressure situations precisely because they have eliminated the pressure.... Pressure is something you put on yourself" – James E. Loehr

Well, a few years earlier, Roger was playing Novak in the semi-final of the US Open and he was serving for the match at 40-15. Roger went with his best serve, out wide, and Novak took a chance, guessed it was going there, and went for a ridiculous winner, which somehow, he made. Low percentage to the n-th degree. But it went in. It rattled Roger, he lost focus, lost the game, and ultimately the match. It was one of the most painful defeats in Roger's career.



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So, the same situation came up a few years later at Wimbledon 2019. He is serving for the match, 40-15 and his best serve is still out wide. Always has been, always will be. He had been winning points all day long on that serve, at a very high percentage. But Roger remembered. He remembered the same situation in the Open. Mr. Cool choked. He served down the middle, relatively weakly, and Djokovic won the point. Roger then doubled down, tried harder the next point, and choked that one too. In these instances, and in the tie-breakers, it wasn't like he was missing shots. He is Roger after all. He just didn't hit his normal forcing shots, and Novak took advantage of the easy balls to dominate the important moments of this classic match. One of the coolest guys on the planet, one of the coolest guys around, lost his cool.

Playing Under Pressure. It is often said that some players play well under pressure. It actually isn't true. The people watching may feel like it is a pressure situation, 5-5 in the 3rd set, their opponent may think it is a pressure situation, but if the player is playing well, they are not looking at it as pressure. They are looking at it as a challenge, an opportunity, their moment on center stage, a time for glory, a chance to win, their destiny, whatever. But they are excited and energized, not fearful and afraid. In the example above, Roger went from cool, to feeling the pressure. "What if Novak makes that shot again?"

If you're not feeling pressure, the answer is obvious, "It's 40-30. Match point for me." But under pressure, you think, "it's happening again! I'll lose!"

Everyone Chokes. Sad but true. We all get a bit tight at times. If you are as good as Roger, it's kind of hard to see, because he isn't missing shots, just not playing as well. But we all can feel it, when it is happening to us. We know we are not the best versions of ourselves, that this is not our best game.

So, what do we do? Sports Psychologist and long-time coach Allan Fox says the first step is to recognize that it happens to everyone. You are not a "bad person," or a "bad competitor," "a big, fat, choke artist." or "unique" because you choke. You're not alone, we all do. In fact, choking just means that you care, but you haven't controlled your focus. Second, if we do choke, what is important is not the past, we choked, but what we do now. The next point, or next game. Getting back in the flow, in the moment, trusting our skills.

Reality Check. Say we are serving for the match, and we get a bit tight, lose the point, maybe even the game. We are still right in the match. It is not over. Maybe it is 40-30 instead of 40-15, or 5-5 instead of 5-4, but these are still very strong positions to be in. Positions you would have dreamed of getting to at the beginning of the match. And how is 5-5 any different, really, if we had been serving 5-4 for the match, or been down 1-5 and came back. It's still 5-5, the score is exactly the same, but our feelings about 5-5 can vary widely. We need to manage this, manage our brain, and its unhelpful thoughts and tendencies.

The trouble is really in our expectations. When we serve at 40-15, or 5-4, we are expecting to win, we feel it is ours for the taking, even that we deserve it. We have already put that "W" up on the score board in the back of our mind. In big bright lights. We are rehearsing our victory speech. Or we think about how great it would be to win. We are keep score, and the points have not even been played yet. Or like Roger, we can relive past nightmares. We all have them.

Of course, this is about more than just at the "big" moments in a match. The constant "keeping score" is a constant problem. Hit that shot well, "I'm winning."

Mishit the ball, feeling embarrassed, "I'm not playing well, I could lose!". "Why can't I play?!?!?" "I don't belong here, they can see it." "The secret is out. Everyone knows I suck!"

Then, "Focus!" Next shot, good hit, bad hit, good hit, bad hit, bad hit, good hit.... It's an emotional roller coaster.

"How am I doing?" after every shot, every point, every game, every match, produces constant anxiety. Good, bad, success, failure, smart, dumb, stupid, athletic, uncoordinated, winner, loser ... trying to predict the future. To constantly judge who I am, my character, my self-worth. Conclusions often deduced from a very small sample size. This is craziness, but we all do it to some extent, and all have to un-learn it to be more successful. Not to mention happy.

In reality, we have no idea what is coming next. Up 5-1, lose four straight games, feel like you're losing. Feel lousy. Down 1-5, win four straight games, feel like you're winning. Reality check: it's tied. 5-5. the score is the same.

So, at 5-5 you happen to win the next two games, relief. Lose them, you're the biggest choke artist in the history of western civilization. Our happiness is too important to rely on flimsy, shot-term results and wild predictions. Which, by the way (even more bad news), can be self-fulfilling.

Joy. Here's a huge secrete, one so obvious almost everyone misses it: You play well because you are happy, not the other way around. Our efforts should be to maintain our high positive energy, our ideal performance state, and not to predict the future. If you love what you are doing, there is a very good chance you're near the top end of your ability.

Cushion the Blow. We often use the strategy, "fear the worst" to try to cushion the blow if things do go badly. But we really don't know. No one knows. And this is craziness. In the "fear the worst" system, you can pay twice, feel lousy twice, or feel lousy in advance, happen to win, and you felt lousy and you didn't even lose. Pointless. And even more important, pretending to feel lousy in advance, does nothing to cushion the blow if something bad does happen. It still hurts really bad. No escaping that. It just means you feel lousy all the time. Is disappointment really so bad that you have to be disappointed all the time to prevent the hurt of disappointment?

That's really wonky thinking. And most of us do it, at least some of the time. Stop. Stop today.

Another Wonky Strategy: Pretending not to care, or giving up, tanking, going on a walkabout. This is another ego defense that makes no sense. Why are you even playing if you're going to do that? A guaranteed loss is better than an uncertain loss? Huh????

Flow. In the flow, you just wait for the next thing. You are open to life, to playing, and make appropriate adjustments as you go along. You leave this poison of judgement and predicting behind. And perfection. You just play. Enjoy each moment. Ride the wave of life. Some ups, some downs, accepting change, and stop fighting what you can't change. And changing what you can, your attitude and performance.

We need to stay in the moment, and play the point. Enjoy the points now, not the "reward" of winning. When we get ahead of ourselves, that is when the result becomes too important, and we choke and never get there. The true reward is of course, playing. Playing well. But the outcome is uncertain, and it makes us nervous. We grasp for things that seem real, like winning, but they are just phantoms.

The Little Things. Of course, we can get ahead of ourselves on a smaller scale too, see our shot ripping by our opponent before the ball has even arrived for us to hit. Not a good plan, we have to move, position, make contact, before we can send the ball back. You can't hit if the ball hasn't even arrived yet. Every part of the stroke is important, from the split step when the ball is on the other side of the net, to the turn, the steps, the adjustment steps, the wind up, the catch, contact, the release, the follow through, the recovery steps, getting in position for the next shot, and a million other little moves. We need to stay focused on the one that matters right now, not just the contact, or where the ball lands, which is in the future.

Being in the flow is waiting for the next thing, then doing it. Then the next thing, which we don't know what it will be, until the current thing is taken care of. It's not getting ahead of ourselves,

Of course, this is all very logical, and easy to understand sitting here, reading this article (or writing it). The trick is to remember all this when you are right in the middle of choking. When you start to walk down the Pressure Highway. Turn around! Get back to the simple things, the building blocks of success. Trust, and wait for the next thing. It's coming. You don't have to know what it is. "Don't forget in the darkness what you knew in the light." – Robert Munger.

One moment, one feeling, at a time. Start with choosing happiness, no matter what. Joy. Love the challenge. Accept your humanity. Embrace grace. Feel OK (openness and kindness). Cool never loses. You can do a lot worse than that.

The Receiver's Partner

The Hot Seat. When I was a kid, playing doubles at tennis camp, they called the receiver's partner, the hot seat. You stood at the service line and were prepared for the server's partner to rip volleys and even overheads at you. I've seen pro doubles teams practice where their coach just peppers them with reflex volleys in this area.

Then, if the return gets by the server's partner, you switch to offense, close it quickly and rip it at them. The hot seat. It was all action, all the time. It was the hardest of the four positions on the court to play, and therefore it was exciting, and pressure free. Anything you did well was like stealing a point from the serving team. It was fun, it was a challenge.

Let's take a moment to review what the receiver's partner job is in doubles:

Call the line. Generally, the receiver's partner should call the service line, and the returner calls the center and side lines. Call the lines you are looking down, not across. However, it is more important to play your position (you are a player first) than to position yourself perfectly to call the line (an official) at the expense of playing the game well.

Defend the middle. Is the net player going to hit the ball? Yes: get ready (low and to the inside) No: move in.

Get to the net. This is harder than it seems, because the job is actually not to get to the net, but to close in and play the ball. It's the person who plays the ball the best that wins, not the one who runs forward fastest. That means that you probably have time to take one or two steps and then you must split step to enable you to change direction and go get the ball at the moment you recognize which way it is going. You basically have three choices as to how to move in and where you split step. 1) You can cover the alley (fake the middle, cover the alley). You would do this if the

return was right to them and kind of weak. 2) On a better return, you can either move to the middle, or 3) poach (switch sides with your partner). Option 1 happens more on first serves, Options 2&3 on second serves.

If you hit it's the fourth shot of the rally, so it is not as important in the grand scheme of things as the serve, return and the serve + one shot, but about 45% of the points go at least 4 shots, and that fourth shot may be yours, so it is important to be able to play this position. And even if you don't hit, where you move will influence what happens.

Quick Tip:

Who Is Moving?

When players are moving, they don't aim so well. And smart players, when they don't aim so well, aim for large targets. In other words, they hit the middle.

So, in doubles, if you are at the net, and your opponent is forced to move, you should slide to the center of the court. In singles, if your opponent is on the move, cover the cross court shot (the ball that crosses the net in the middle).

If you are comfortable when you are hitting (not moving), then try to hit a ball that makes them move some. (often down the line in singles, through the middle or to the sides in doubles). If you are uncomfortable (moving), play a more defensive shot, in the middle.

Let's take this a bit farther, on a first serve, you should try to get your opponent to move some. Don't serve it in the middle of the box, and certainly not right to the forehand. Second serve, get it in (more the middle of the box).

On a first serve return, when they are probably moving you, get it in (aim for over the middle of the net). On a second serve, when you are comfortable (not moving), try to move them (alley, middle, wide). Down the line in singles.

This concept is an extension of one of the most fundamental ideas in tennis: only hit shots you can make. And cover the shots that are easy for them to make. As we discussed last month, when you are uncomfortable (moving), your best chance to win is they miss. Get your shot in. When you are comfortable (not moving), your best chance to win is to make them move (uncomfortable), i.e. try to force an error. Make shots. Let winners happen, don't force it.

Make tennis a moving experience. It's a simple way to look at tennis that really works quite well. Good luck out there!

Peloton Tennis

Some of you may have noticed, but I recently got a Peloton bike. "I am, I can, I will, I do." – Christine D'Ercole.

And I set it up in the corner of the office, looking out the window towards the courts. I thought that would be cool, after all it is a great view of the East Bay Hills. But what a bonus it has been to see all the great tennis being played by members of the Club. I mean, you guys look good! The strokes, the strategy, the tactics, the effort, the fun. From our 5.0 team to the enthusiastic beginners, from the seniors to the juniors, and everyone in between. You inspire me, on and off the bike. Well played Orindawoods!

Winter Junior Program 2020

The 2020 Winter Junior Clinics began the week of **January 13th**, and will continue thru the week of **March 9th**. The 9-week program will be led by **Head Pro Patric Hermanson**. The Level 1 and II classes will be taught using aspects of the USTA Red, Orange, Green, Yellow (ROGY) Development Program.

<u>Level</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Time(s)</u>	<u>One day/week</u>	<u>Two Days</u>
I	<u>Lil' Ones</u>	Tues/Thurs 3:15-4pm	\$125*	\$200*
	<i>The Lil' Ones class is for the always adorable 4-6 year olds. We will be developing the coordination and balance of these young players as well as giving them an introduction to tennis using age appropriate balls and court size.</i>			
II	<u>Future Stars Group</u>	Tuesdays 4-5:30pm	\$235*	N/A
	<i>The Future Stars Group is for our 7 to 10 year old players. The players will be working with 10 and under balls on 36', 60' and full courts. Stroke instruction, tennis games, and match play are all part of the curriculum as we work our way up to green dot balls and full court.</i>			
III	<u>Tennis Development Group</u>	Thursdays 4-5:30pm	\$235*	N/A
	<i>In the Tennis Development Group we will work on refining technique, improving footwork and developing strategic awareness for successful match play. This class is for beginning through intermediate players ages 11 thru 14.</i>			
IV	<u>Tournament Training Group</u>	Wednesdays 4:30-6:30pm	\$300*	N/A
	<i>The Tournament Training Group is an <u>invitation only</u> class. Contact Patric about setting up a try-out.</i>			

Non-members: add \$25 (\$15 for Lil' Ones). **Inclement Weather:** check orindawoodstennis.com "Live Tennis Cam".