



# Orindawoods Tennis News

February 2024

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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*

## HAS Management Company

As most of you know, Orindawoods has a new management company for the Orindawoods Homeowner's Association (Keith remains the Executive Tennis Director for the Tennis Club). Homeowner's Association Services (HAS) is now the management company that handles the accounting and bookkeeping services for the Tennis Club. If you are trying to set up auto pay, or have some trouble with your statement, please contact HAS (info on Page 2). The transition from SliverCreek has not been flawless, so HAS has not always received the correct information. So don't be shy, if there is a problem, we want to work it out. HAS and Tennis Club staff is here to help.

As I mentioned last month, we apologize for having to make this change, since you had everything set up before, but it was necessary for multiple reasons, and after a bit of short-term pain, you are going to be much happier in the long-term with HAS managing your account. Thanks for your patience.

## Orindawoods Court Cam

The Orindawoods court cam is up and working, as of Sunday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>. We have installed new cameras, and have been testing it, and it seems to be running fine.

If you go to the Tennis Club website, in the upper left hand corner there is a link to "Live Tennis Camera." We offer two views, one of courts 2&3, and the other of courts 4&5, with 6&7 in the background. If you right click on the picture, you can even open a new window, with a much larger picture (fills your screen).

There were a lot of technical (hardware and software) and coding issues to get this to work, but it is back, and wonderful.

There should be a link on the court reservation app in the near future. We're looking forward to that as well. I will continue to post a "best guess" court conditions report on days where there is some question or interpretation needed. ☺ My crystal ball is fired up.

## Damp Courts

Orindawoods is amazing, but it must be said, that this winter, in particular, there is a lot of dampness on the courts. And we don't mean when it is raining, but post rain, and even just fog / condensation that frequently creates dampness on four of our seven courts. Courts 1-4 tend to take a lot longer to dry, than courts 5-7. This is due in large part to the proximity of courts 1-4 to vegetation, hillsides and therefore lack of sunlight and wind. Of course, the rest of the year, we are frustrated by courts 4-7 being so darn windy, due to being out in the open, compared to the other three. Apparently, we don't get to have it all.

There has been a lot of talk recently about how to improve this damp situation, especially on courts 2, 3 and 4 by "thinning out the trees". First, these trees are oaks, and can't be removed. Nor would we want to, as they contribute greatly to the beauty and ambiance

## 2024 Club Rates

### Tennis Lessons with Keith & Erik:

|                |      |
|----------------|------|
| ½ hour private | \$50 |
| 1 hour private | \$85 |

|              |        |
|--------------|--------|
| Semi-pvt (2) | \$55ea |
| Semi-pvt (3) | \$37ea |
| Semi-pvt (4) | \$28ea |
| 45 min pvt   | \$65   |
| 1.5-hour pvt | \$125  |

Non-members add \$5

**Club Dues:** \$152 / 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

## Pickleball Playday

Tues. 5:30-7 begins in spring.

## Ball Machine

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

- Ball Machine Club runs thru 3/30/24
- 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 picks up and drops off racquets early on Tuesday and Friday mornings. Put some zip back your game, get a restring!

## Quote of the Month:

*"Life is uncharted territory. It reveals its story one moment at a time."*

■ Leo Buscaglia

of The 'Woods. And there are large portions of the year when their shade is much appreciated.

But what about thinning them out, or windowing them, to allow more sun and wind through, to dry the courts?

While this seems an attractive idea in these damp, dank, dark days of winter — we're all desperate to play — when this idea is examined more closely, it is not the solution we are really looking for. Why?

Well, the courts only have this dampness problem in December, January and part of February, the coldest months in NorCal, when there is condensation on the back of courts 2&3 and the side of court 4. Basically, we get valley or tule fog. It is frustrating and annoying, especially when it hasn't even rained. Argh.... I feel your pain, I'm sure you can sense mine. I'm drying courts every morning.

The problem is that thinning or windowing a tree does just that, it lets light and wind through onto the court. Blotchy light on a tennis court is far worse than dampness for unplayability. Right now, it might not seem that way, a damp, unplayable court beneath your frustrated feet, but you need to trust me on this one.

**A Story.** Unknown to most everyone currently at the Club, but the freeway side of the courts (east side, along courts 3, 4 and 6) was originally lined with pine trees. When I got to the Club 29 years ago, these trees had already been removed, but you could still see the stumps along the top of the berm on the east side of the courts. I asked a few members about it at the time, and they said the dark shadows and then bright light alternating across the court was so bad that it was almost impossible to play, and these trees were quickly removed. At the time of my arrival, there was one "volunteer" pine tree next to court 3 that had snuck back in. Its shadow was right between the service line and the baseline on the south side. If you were returning serve, the ball would bounce in the service box in the bright light, then

come towards you into a shadow (and basically disappear, your eyes frantically adjusting to the darkness), only then to "pop" out into the light just as you were trying to hit it. Blinded again by the light. You can just imagine. That tree was removed as well to stop the filtered light.

While the dampness only affects play in the dead of winter, when frankly fewer people attempt to play tennis, filtered light would be a problem in the morning (when most members play) all year around. In fact, court 4 is often avoided, just because half of it is in the shade, and half in the sun, and it is hard to see the ball come out of the shadows. And that isn't even filtered light, where the ball is constantly in the dark and then in the light. I played a match when I was 16 years old in these conditions out in San Ramon, and it was so tough, one of the nightmare matches of my youth. I can't image doing that with my "older" eyes. Most people around here have "older" eyes. Ugh. Sorry, it's true. Of course, this condition is much worse if you are wearing sunglasses (because it is a bright, sunny day). The ball simply vanishes in the shade when you are wearing sunglasses. Not conducive to playing tennis, or enjoyment.

BTW, the people that planted potentially huge redwood trees on the hill behind courts 6&7 to the southwest have created a problem for us for late afternoon tennis in the not-too-distant future as these potentially giant trees continue to grow. Soon these afternoons could get tough. I'm not naming names, but a firing squad has been prepared out behind the woodshed.

Kidding aside, we still have the problem of the dampness. What can we do? As you may know, we have been using a Vaptr on courts 2&3 this winter, which has allowed there to be many lessons that would have been too wet without this equipment. (My count is 32 lessons in 5 weeks, not including 15 or so for Erik). This is a bit of a test run to see if this might be a more wide-spread solution in the future in other parts of the club. Right now, the Vaptr (a quite expensive piece of equipment at \$3,500) is only for use by staff for mostly lesson (though I do the ball machine court some too, from time to time). The Vaptr is hard physical work, very tiring to use, so it might not be the perfect solution for most members. I can do one court and that is about it. If I do two courts, my arms and back are so tired and sore, I might as well forget playing. I'm not sure a lot of members would be up for "Vaptr-ing." And we don't have the manpower for staff to do multiple courts.

We are also in the process of trying out some other squeegee solutions, especially for court #4. Most squeegees move water off the court, which is great to set up the conditions for drying (sun, wind, ambient air and surface temperature), but with dampness, we really need a mechanism that lifts some of the water off the court. Mops (like the Vaptr) are one solution, as well as roller

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## HAS Management

Accounting and billing  
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[www.hoaservices.net](http://www.hoaservices.net)

squeegees (which need to be wet and soft to work - and sadly, get damaged quite easily - please hang them up!!!), and towels (don't cover much space). These come in various forms that we are exploring. We have recently acquired a towel system, that you can drag around the court, we are hopeful will help lift some of the water. A poor-man's Vaptr, hopefully easier to use.

As the conditions for drying improve, more sun, less rain, warmer temperatures and therefore warmer ground temperatures, there will be far less dampness (other than when it just plain rains).

**Current Conditions / Court Cam:** It's great to have the court cam back. This will help a lot. The problem with the court cam, however, is it is very hard to detect "dampness" as compared to "dry." But you will know it is really wet, soaked or not.

**Blessed.** Stepping back from our current frustrations, in a sense, we are both blessed and cursed in NorCal. This is one of the few places in the country, and really, there are not many climates and locations in the world, where there are seasons (it does rain) and yet the weather is a warm enough temperature, and conditions are mostly favorable for playing outside, even in the wintertime, on dry days. In my forty-year career as a tennis pro, I would say I'm able to teach about 70% of my scheduled winter lessons. While indoor courts in colder parts of the world can solve some of these problems, it is much nicer to play tennis outside, in my opinion. Tennis, stuck inside a "warehouse" loses a lot of its charm, no matter how dry it is. And of course, in the sun belt, you can play in the winter, but then again, you don't really want to be outside in the summer (tennis and 119 degrees, or 100% humidity, not a good mix). Palm Springs or Florida is nice in February, but not so much in July / August, thank you very much.

So, we are lucky, even if a bit annoyed. We'll keep working on better ways to dry the dampness on the courts, but trimming trees is going to cause far more problems than it will solve (and once they are cut, it takes a while to restore the solid shade, if they ever do), for a relatively small part of the year. And remember, how often we remind ourselves, "we need the rain," droughts and fires are not all that fun either. Thanks for your patience, the dampness is lifting, spring is coming! It is amazing how much faster the courts dry in October, March, and April, then in December and January.

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## Junior Tennis

### **Spring Junior Program and Winter Make-ups**

It has been a wet year, especially on Wednesdays. Head Pro Erik, our staff and our junior tennis players have done their best to keep playing through the deluge, dodging the rain drops. Erik has dates set up for class make-ups. If you are in the junior program, you should have received information on your make-up sessions. If not, contact Erik.

**The Spring Session** is scheduled to begin on 2/26. Space is limited, and many of our students are continuing, as our program is quite full, but there are some spots. Check in with Erik if you are interest in joining in. See Page 7 for the schedule, not only for the spring, but the yearly schedule. **Registration for the summer** will begin soon, probably in late March or early April. Look for it, Erik has great plans for the summer! We're living the dream!

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## Tennis Tip:

### **Twist My Arm**

We have discussed that force is mass times acceleration ( $F=MA$ ). And that most people really misunderstand force in tennis. They think that is it speed, or strength, momentum (swing) or some combination of those. This leads to many of the errors plaguing us all. Those errors frustrate and rob us of the joy and ease that should be ours playing tennis.

There are really three paradigms (belief systems) for playing tennis: shooting the ball (stretch and release), swinging, and hitting (momentum), and pushing (leverage, strength). The methods, tips, preparation, positioning, and instructions are very different for each system, so it is best to know how you play, before you start taking advice, and from whom. Otherwise, you could get very confused, with the wrong fix for your system.

All three paradigms share some things in common, but differing solutions could often send you completely in the wrong direction. While "take your racquet back" is appropriate for the swinging and hitting model, it is probably the worst advice ever for the more modern shooting model. Or even the "self-taught, do-it-yourself" pushing model. You may need to get behind the ball in all systems, how you do that can be very different. More on this next month.

Once we get to the intellectual understanding that force is mass (weight) times acceleration (speeding up), how do we achieve such a situation to best effect when playing a tennis ball? (I resist saying "hit" because hit conjures up swinging, which is close, but not quite ideal, and thus leads to most errors - too much force, thus facing too high of net and too small of court). Since most recreational players either swing (momentum) at a tennis ball to hit it or push it (leverage) to control it (but not have it go flying), and neither of those create a lot of acceleration, clearly a better understanding of force is required. Much on that can be found in past articles. Let's move on to how.

Again, if force equals mass times acceleration ( $F=MA$ ), how do we put our weight on the ball and then speed up, at just the right moment. Well, ... twist my arm, I'll tell you. :-)

**Forehands.** If you are right-handed and you hold your right arm out in front of you at waist height or slightly higher (good leverage position with your weight - mass - relative to contact) in a relaxed, comfortable position, the palm of the hand, tends to be facing to your left. It varies slightly from player to player, and male to female. (Males tend to have their arms more rotated in the relaxed position, females a bit more palms upward, but still rotated).

From this starting position, if you twist your arm (your entire arm, not just your forearm) so that your fingers and palm are pointing up, as if to catch a ball tossed toward you, or hold a tray, your arm is twisted, perhaps 90 degrees or less. In this new position, you must use muscles to hold it there, your arm wants to return to that initial, relaxed position. If when you catch that ball and release that tension in your upper arm and shoulder, your arm will return to the starting position. The hand finishes on the side of the ball, fingers holding the ball from dropping. Doesn't seem like a lot going on -- a very natural "release." No effort at all (a bit holding the ball, in the fingers / forearm, but none in releasing the arm).

What if we did that same move while holding the grip of a tennis racket lightly in my hand (instead of catching the ball)? The hand would move about the same, quickly, but not very dramatically, but the tip of the racquet would flip around unbelievably fast, with great acceleration. This release would actually create an momentum in the end of the racquet head that would pull your arm (if it was totally relaxed) into what looks a lot like a follow through in tennis (This happens because your arm is attached to your shoulders, when the racquet head got to the end of your reach, the racquet head would naturally arc around to your left side). Not a move that you did, or forced, something you let happen. That follow through would be very floppy, like Federer's. Hmmm.... There's a clue.... "Be like Roger."

Let's add on. Now you can't even hold your arm in the most twisted position, it just springs back and releases by itself ("the arrow releases itself" - *Zen and the Art of Archery* - Eugen Herrigel). So if I twisted my arm back (my hand to that catch position or even a bit beyond) right as the ball arrived, it would snap back far faster than your eye can even see, with great acceleration, especially at the beginning of the move back, right when the ball is on the strings, right when you have "caught it." In fact I would get a bit more twist from the momentum of the racquet head going back, the weight of it perhaps stretching my arm even a bit farther, a bit tighter of spring. Thus force, great force, in a small instant, available to play the ball.

Woosh, modern tennis, "shooting the ball," in an instance. The release. Like Bruce Lee's famous "one-inch punch" that could knock a man over. Concentrated force, in an instant. On demand.

The racquet continues to fly forward, in what looks a lot like a swing, a muscle contraction, but in fact is just the slowing down, the relaxing, the deceleration after the release, the smoke after the explosion. Federer-ized.

Force in tennis: not a contraction of the muscles in the way we think, but a stretch and shorten. (In physiology terms: the stretch / shorten cycle). You are shooting the ball, not hitting or pushing. How does this work on other shots?

**One-handed backhand,** for a right-hander, playing a one-handed backhand, start with your arm out in front of your body again, palm facing left in a relaxed position, like you swing your arms when you walk, but this time twist / rotate the entire arm (from the shoulder joint) to the left, with the thumb and fingers pointed down, palm facing forward. Much like a left-handed baseball player would make a backhand catch of a ball (baseball glove would be on their right hand, for a left-handed thrower). It takes muscle tension to hold the hand in this position, in fact it is rather uncomfortable for most people. Now just release that tension and let the arm spring back into that natural position, the fingers forward and the palm facing to the left. Again, this doesn't seem like much, but a great deal happens very quickly out on the end of a racquet once you place one in your hand and invert the arm in this way. Plenty fast enough for a devastating backhand. Again, the follow through would just be allowed to happen, rather than forced or guided.

**For a two-handed backhand,** you would combine the forehand instruction (but the opposite) for the left hand, and the one-handed instruction for the right hand. Some two-handed backhands are more right-hand dominant, like Agassi, while most others (and pretty much all women and kids) are left-hand dominate (a left-handed forehand, really). The right hand is there more to guide than to power (they are right-handed, after all). Emphasize the stretch on the power-dominant hand, in this case, which ever one you choose, or both.

Our arms can rotate in our shoulders about 270 degrees, but it is this first third or so (up to 90 degrees or less), when you stretch and then just release the tension, that the turn accelerates to full speed. It is also when the racquet stings go from being out of alignment with the ball (primary target) and the distant target over the net and in the opponent's court (secondary target). Again, remember, it is the acceleration that leads to power, not the speed. We want to catch the ball in the very early part of the release, when the "spring" of the muscles is releasing and acceleration the quickest.

**Where Strokes Go South.** When players think of "speed" instead of "acceleration" (often when the term "hit" is used to describe the action), they swing, because it takes a bit of time and distance to get up to full speed, so you want to start early, but this is a mistaken belief to maximize force. We want to catch the ball in the very early part of the release, when the "rubber band" is releasing and accelerating the fastest. Not when we have the most speed, which is later, but acceleration is decreasing (we can't "speed up" anymore- we're at top speed). Again, for backhands, if you wait, and then make a final stretch back, when you really think you should be going forward, that not only receives

the ball (touch, feel, cushion, hold), but causes a greater stretch, more than one you can hold in one place, and therefore (“the arrow releases itself”) you have more acceleration to work with. Or spoken more truthfully, you allow more acceleration to happen.

**Like at Indian Wells.** One time I was watching Nadal practice at Indian Wells, and I was about ten feet away from where he was hitting forehands, facing me, behind the side fence, on the ad court side (he’s left-handed). I had the perfect perspective for seeing how long he was waiting, how stretched back his arm was, when he releases, and his timing. Every single shot, I could see how long he waited, and truthfully, I thought he was going to be late on every shot, and the ball would go straight in the ground (racquet face still pointing towards the ground). He was catching the ball on the first 30-40 degrees of rotation, with unbelievable quickness (you couldn’t see it with the human eye), and he didn’t miss a single shot. Only now, with further reflection and study, am I understanding exactly what I witnessed, but it has been a lasting impression and vision to contemplate.

In fact, Federer, and Djokovic were out there that day on adjacent courts, and they were not playing the ball with as much power and spin as Nadal. The acceleration is the greatest right after the release, something Nadal had mastered. The player that waits the longest, is the best player, has the most acceleration. Interesting to note that Nadal is generally considered a consistent, control player. So, the acceleration is used for spin, and to keep the ball in.

Now backhand, forehand or serve, if you are unwinding, you are wrapping around the ball, as well as going forward, think of a corkscrew, or a propeller, so you produce not only forward speed on the ball, but also spin. Topspin in these examples. Spin is the secret to control and allows the modern player to play the ball with so much forward speed. Much more than what we have seen in the past, in the swing or push models, which are much more “flat” shots. Or we still observe this flat contact with many recreational players, who don’t have such refined technique.

**For the serve,** a right-handed player should coil their arm (elbow pointing forward) over their head by stretching it so that the palm points to the left, towards their right ear, even facing slightly behind them as the arm reaches and straightens for the ball. This is quite an uncomfortable twist that you can’t really hold, but stretching the last bit with the help of the racquet head momentum backwards, rather than muscling the hand forward, creates the final stretch and quick release. This release leads to 90% of the power (acceleration) on the serve (this is the driving force behind proper internal shoulder rotation and wrist extension — cause by release and not conscious muscle contraction). Twist your arm, stretch as far as you can, and release. No swinging, especially forward or even up (two mistaken beliefs).

Swinging your arm forward (a huge misunderstanding by most servers), just tends to cause your arm to come out of the socket. This is bad (ouch, especially if the motion is repeated at high speed over and over again- the arm is held in the socket by the rotator cuff, which can eventually tear). And not only that but swinging forward brings much more timing into the equation, and players will often go forward too soon (miss the shot, long or in the net). If you are rotating your shoulder instead, errors tend to be in width in nature. Much better misses and an indicator you’re on the correct stroke path. There are “good” errors (moving towards mastery), and “bad” errors on the learning path.

**On the volley,** you twist back (coil) just a fraction later, as you receive the ball. As your arm twists back, the tension builds and the racquet slows down until it can’t hold the tension, and it springs forward. On the volley, where you want to take speed off the ball in most cases, you want to receive the ball in this twisting-back stage. If done properly, before the twist is released, on the volley, the ball is already gone. So, we use the same twist, at a slightly different time, to create underspin and to take speed off the ball. As my teacher Doug said, “All the strokes are the same, even shots seeming as different as topspin and underspin.” We want to receive the ball on this backward motion, to absorb the ball, cushion it, take speed off, so you can return those huge forehands being fired at you, thus keeping the ball in the court and out of the net. To do that, you must be able to hit low volleys up, over the net, but you must slow the ball down enough that it doesn’t go long (due to either bouncing off the strings or too much forward energy). The under-spin itself certainly helps with this process of taking speed off the ball (converting forward energy into rotational energy, so there is less forward energy, i.e. the ball won’t travel as fast or as far), combined with deceleration at contact that does most of the trick. You achieve that deceleration by winding the tension in the arm as the ball connects with the racquet. The same would be true on the ground-stroke slice as well.

It should be noted, people new to the sport, as well as some old hands, become fascinated with spin, particularly under-spin, because it can make the ball bounce funny. But spin is primarily for controlling the ball, which is fun in the bigger picture of keeping the ball in play and winning more matches.

**Conclusion:** On all these moves, it is just the slightest of turns that is required to add great force and spin (on the forehand, backhand and serve) or take great force off the ball on the volleys and slice groundstrokes. Frankly, 99% of the people playing are doing way too much. Way, way too much. And hurting themselves in the process. An example of the Law of Diminishing Returns (especially on the return, ha ha).

A human arm can rotate about 270 degrees in the shoulder joint, but again, it is the first 60-90 degrees where the big twist is, and therefore the release is found. The rest of the 200 degrees of rotation is just the result of the stretch and release in that first 60-90 degrees. In other words, a bit of stretch, and then just let go. The acceleration in the racquet head, with the resulting weight and momentum out on the end of the racquet will create the follow through (that

momentum will pull your arm around to a natural deceleration and finish, no need to “make the follow through happen”), if you hold the racquet loosely and just “let go.” One of the main ways I can tell the player is using the best force, is the follow-through looks like an afterthought, the arm pulled around by momentum and out of control, as opposed to what most players would do, forcing or guiding the finish with manual contractions of the arms.

If we divide the stroke into receiving and sending, the source of sending is found in the receiving part. During the receiving is when you wind your arm (stretch your muscles) to “catch” the ball. Sending is just letting go. That is, the sending phase of the stroke is passive. The receiving is more active. In the sending phase, if you are working, forcing, pulling, swinging the racquet when you hit the ball (send the ball), you are over playing the shot and using a much less effective method of playing tennis. You are basically getting in the way of releasing and causing a lot of errors and injuries. This is why, occasionally, when we hit a shot it feels so easy, and the ball went so well. We let go. We got out of the sending business. This goes for controlling the follow through as well in a mistaken attempt to control the ball. We want to control the ball by the direction of the racquet face, and by applying spin, not by holding back the natural stretching and releasing movement of our muscles. Acceleration should help us control the ball, not be thought of as the enemy of control. Speed may kill, but acceleration can save.

When we throw a ball, we let go to get maximum force, and spin. There is a release velocity, where the ball just comes out of our hand (slips off our fingers). We want to create this with the racquet as well, and then choose, ever so slightly after the ball is released, to hold on to the racquet instead of letting the racquet go as well, this time. But it should feel like until that moment, after contact, you were going to toss the racquet forward.

**Practice Exercises:** 1) Without a racquet, let your arm just hang by your side to start with. Turn your arm in the shoulder joint. Feel the stretch, try to hold it, then let it go. Let it “fall back.” Don’t turn the arm back, let it spring back. It seems like nothing is happening because you are not “doing anything.” But you are. 2) Next, bounce a ball, and turn your arm under (palms under the ball) to catch the ball on the way back down. As soon as you catch the ball, the same release of tension, let the arm rotate back into its natural position. Do this several times, then 3) with a racquet in hand, try the same thing. First just the motion. Then 4) try the same motion with hitting a ball. Pretend you are reaching your hand under the ball to catch it. Point the butt of the racquet towards the ball, then just release when you think you would catch it. When it would land in your hand, if you weren’t holding the handle of the racquet. 5) You can do this while using the ball machine, or just dropping the ball and playing the ball into the side fence (so you don’t have to chase it). Reaching out for the ball to catch it, helps with this winding, stretching position, and then causes the release. Play with, see if you can get the ball to go “without doing anything.” Next, 6) see if you can do it all in one motion, first reaching towards the ball, then twisting your arm/hand under the ball to catch, at the last moment, then releasing right when you would catch and let the racquet just move where it moves. As you stretch back, observe how the weight of the racquet head causes your arm to stretch further. If you do it properly, it’s going to feel like your hand is way too close to the ball, and if you do make contact, it will be on the throat of the racquet. Do it anyway, you might be surprised. 7) Focus on your arm. The sensation of the muscles twisting back and releasing. Stretch and shorten. Forget the ball or even the racquet head. When we get away from the idea of moving the head of the racquet, and just do these subtle moves with our arms, a whole new world opens for us, and we truly begin to understand the power we possess. Let the arm move the racquet, let the racquet hit the ball. These are not your jobs. There is an amazing ease with which we can play. Which we want to play. We start to understand force – realize and accept -- the natural state of things. Tennis gets a whole lot easier.

Don’t worry, as hard as it is for the ego to give up / release trying, and hitting, and manipulating pretty much everything, the joy the ego will find in excellence, in mastery, will take care of that little problem. You just must get to the success stage. That means, letting go of what you think you know, and just humbly experimenting. Everything you think you knew about tennis and force before, was a bit off, if not wrong. “For every situation in life there is an answer that is clear, simple and wrong.” If you can let go of these old beliefs, then the thrill will help you get through the short discomfort of learning. The reward is worth it, far outweighing the pain and discomfort of learning. More isn’t better, better is better.

#71

Not-knowing is true knowledge.  
Presuming to know is a disease.  
First realize that you are sick.  
then you can move toward health

The Master is her own physician.  
She has healed herself of all knowing.  
This she is truly whole.

— Lao Tzu, *The Tao te Ching*, Stephen Mitchell’s translation.

