



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

Season's Greetings:

Happy Holidays!

Well, 2020 has been a very challenging year for all of us. Here at Orindawoods we want to wish you all a happy and safe holiday season.

What a wonderful thing we have created, Orindawoods Tennis Club. You, me, your friends, fellow members, the board. A place we can come and enjoy life, in spite of all this craziness.

Thanks so much for your support, love and comradery throughout this very tough year. We have been the most amazing team. Give each other a virtual high five. Well played, everyone! – Keith & Patric

Holiday Hours

Thanksgiving Weekend	CLOSED Thursday-Saturday
Christmas Eve	CLOSED
Christmas	CLOSED
New Year's Day	CLOSED

We may have additional shorter hours on some days due to the holidays, weather, vacations, etc...

COVID-19 Club Rules, The Four Key Things:

- Physical distancing is required at all times (six feet, more if exercising)
- Masks are required on the property at all times, with the following exceptions: 1. while playing singles; 2. while members of the same household are playing together; 3. while practicing by yourself.
- No guests are allowed on the property (without permission of management).
- Socializing is not allowed. Play and Go.

A full copy of the rules is available on the website (court rules page):

<https://www.orindawoodstennis.com/pages/index.cfm?siteid=94>

Tennis Tip:

Depth of Field

Except for when we are serving, every single shot we play in tennis, the ball is coming towards us. Sometimes it comes fast, sometimes slow, sometimes deep, and sometimes short. A bit to the left, a bit to the right. Tennis becomes about movement, footwork, adjusting to the flight of the incoming ball. Some movement is beneficial, too much tends to lead to errors and mistakes. We need a system, or plan, for how we are going to deal with all the different kinds of balls that come our way.

In photography, a camera lens has a depth of field, an area where the subject is in focus. In front or in back of that depth, everything is blurry. Most of our cameras adjust this automatically these days, but with an advanced camera, you can control the depth of field so that one area (one depth) is in focus, and everything in front or behind that object becomes out of focus. With certain settings, you can even change the amount of depth that is in focus, making it bigger or smaller. This can create a pretty cool effect for the picture.

Of course, depth of field is what our eyes do as well. We focus in on an object at a certain depth. Try this: If you hold your hand out in front of your face and hold your finger up (be very careful which finger you extend unless you are

2020/21 Lesson Rates

Keith & Patric

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

Jennifer (is taking time off)

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

Non-members add \$5

Weekly Lessons

Hit and Fit:

Canceled due to COVID-19.

Tuesday Ladies' Clinic:

Canceled due to COVID-19

Thursday Men's Clinic:

Canceled due to COVID-19

Ball Machine

Ball machine is open again! The cost is \$40 through March. Reserve Court 3 to use the ball machine. Ball machine times:

- Before 9 a.m. 7 days a week
- 10:30-6pm Weekdays
- 12 noon to 6pm Weekends
- Reservations are for one hour

This court is also used for open play and some lessons, so the machine is not available at all times. Enjoy!

Quotes of the Month:

"You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems." – James Clear

"The mind creates the abyss, and the heart crosses it."

-- Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

alone). If you focus on your index finger, and keep focus on that, you can still see everything behind that finger, but it is all blurry, out of focus. This is depth of field. You are focused on your finger, not what is behind it.

There is even a tennis pro, Scott Ford from Colorado, who suggests that you should set your depth of field with your eyes at the contact point, let everything else further away be blurry, and let the ball (as it approaches you) come into focus, rather than always having to adjust your focus as the ball gets closer, or changes depths. Try this, it isn't easy to tell your eyes not to focus on an object, but if you can, surprisingly, it actually works pretty well. Apparently, you do not have to have an object in focus to still see it and track it. I'm not suggesting that you change to using your eyes this way, but it might be kind of fun to play around with. Our brain gets the information from what we are seeing whether we are focused on it or not. If you register danger from out of the corner of your eye, you quickly adjust your focus.

I want to take this idea of depth of field a little different way.

When the ball comes over the net, it flies through the air, and is pulled back to the ground by a combination of gravity and air resistance. Spin, or aerodynamics can also affect its flight. The ball bounces, which further slows it down, from friction with the ground, and then it goes back up into the air, slower than it arrived, and bounces up to a peak, and then is pulled back to earth again by gravity and air resistance, until it bounces a second time.

Sometimes we volley the ball before it bounces, or half volley it right after it bounces, or hit it on the rise just before the peak, or at the peak or when it is dropping back down (see FIG. A). Most of us have a preferred place on the arc of the ball's flight that we like to hit the ball. For most of us, it is right after the peak, but before it drops too much (i.e. slower, but still coming towards us).

Perception. It is interesting to note that if we contact the ball at this time, after the peak, it is going less than half as fast as when it was first hit. So, a ball hit at 60 mph off my opponent's racquet is going about 48 mph before it bounces on my side, about 35 mph after it bounces and about 27 mph after it peaks and starts to fall down again, in our ideal depth of field, where we like to play the ball. This is one reason why we have a lot more time than we think, because we see a sixty-mph shot as moving fast, but we are not really hitting that ball, we are hitting one much slower.

To counter-act that optical illusion, is another, which is that when an object is far away, it doesn't seem to be moving very fast but when it gets closer, it seems to be going much faster because we are better at discerning the change in depth as it gets closer (a fastball that "explodes" in baseball). Even if it is actually going slower, like a tennis ball after it bounces. These two ideas tend to make the ball seem like it is going the same speed all the time, but it isn't.

Contact Point. Our stroke has a precise contact point. By moving our feet, we can bring that contact point forward or backwards, left or right. In other words, we create a depth of field. **The trick** in tennis is that every ball is different, changing from shot to shot. One ball comes deep, the next one short. Some balls tend to peak and drop farther inside the court than others.

Now with a camera, there is not just one depth where the object is in focus, but a depth of field, an area, a range, often several feet, where any object at that depth would be in focus. So, if you are taking a picture of a group of people in three rows, the ones in the front, and the ones in the back are all in focus, but the mountains behind them are not.

We could say the same with receiving a tennis ball. There is a range of depths where it doesn't throw us off too much, we can take a step forward or back and still play the ball well. However, if this area becomes too large, our shot gets "out of focus". We can't get in position or miss-time the ball and make mistakes.

Everyone you play has an average depth to their shots. Some go deeper, some go shorter, but in general, there is an average depth.

The most basic depth of field in the game of tennis is the ball has to land in the court, or you don't have to play it. A ball landing behind the baseline would require you to stand back farther, but since that ball is out, there is no need to stand back that far. As you get more experienced, you can have smaller, more useful depths of field than just any ball that goes in. Some people's shots generally land deep, others, short.

In pro tennis, where the ball is going very fast, that ideal contact area (depth of field) is much deeper. Thiem or Nadal tend to stand back by the fence to find that spot, especially on huge serves. In Club tennis, the ball is going much slower, and landing shorter, so that ideal contact area, or depth of field, is much closer, almost always in front of the baseline (except when receiving a lob). It follows, that 3.0 is going to stand closer than a 4.0, or a 4.5.



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You want to stand where most of their shots tend to peak in an ideal spot for you to hit (FIG B). If 3 out of 5 of their shots are in the right place to hit (in a 5 ft diameter range) and the other 2 are shorter or deeper, this is where you want to take up position, in the depth of field of their average shots (60% in this case).

From this position, you can move forward for the shorter shots, and back for the deeper ones (or take them out of the air before they bounce if they are really deep). If instead you positioned for the deeper shots (the "harder" shots), 4 of the 5 shots would require a lot of moving, and you probably wouldn't even get the short one.

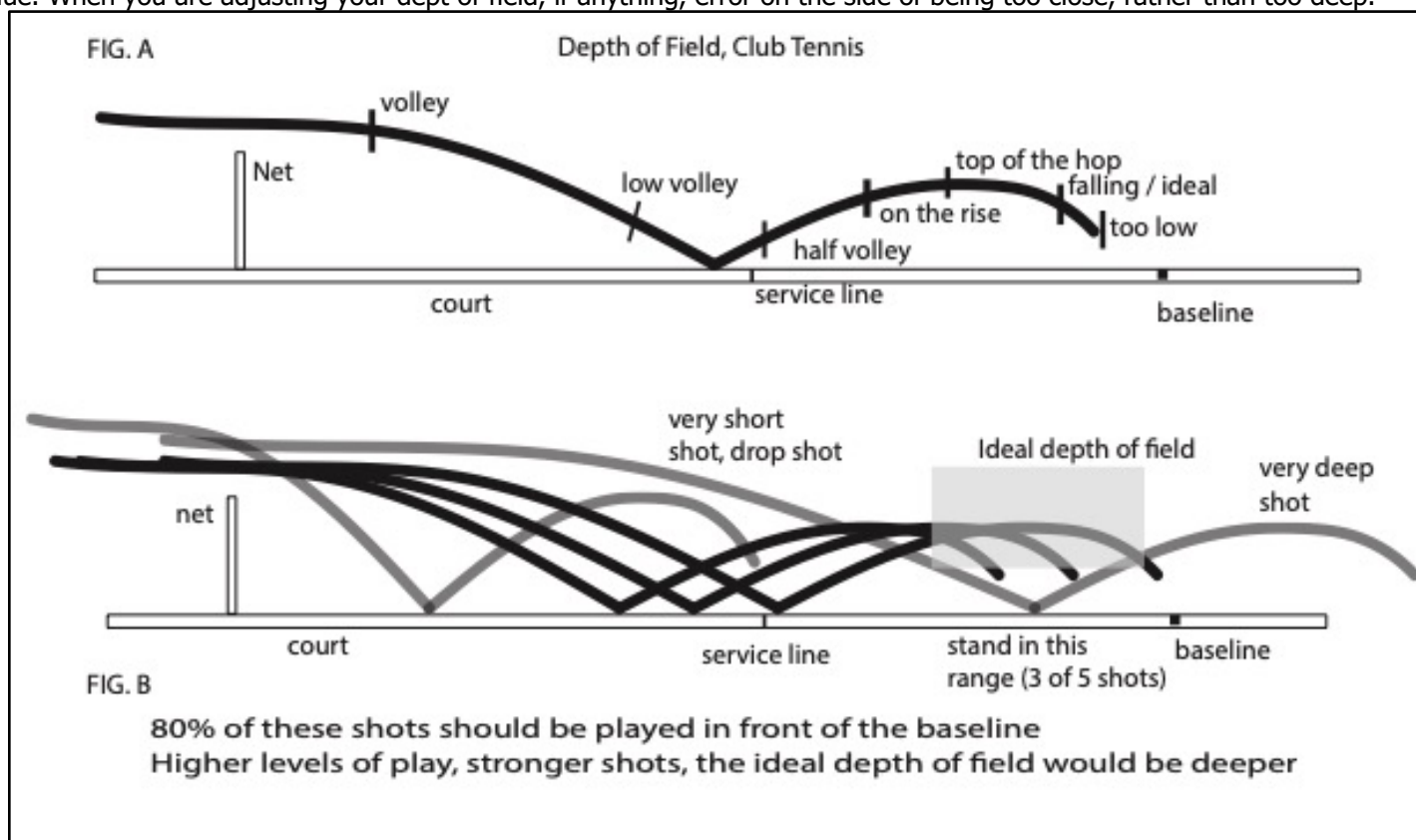
Situational. This ideal depth varies with the situation. You may be playing someone whose first serve is at the ideal depth right behind the baseline on average, but whose second serve, it would be better to stand up halfway between the baseline and the service line (about the blue line on our courts). Maybe their forehand is usually stronger and deeper than their backhand. Your positioning should vary depending on how good their shot usually is. Are they hitting a forehand now, or a backhand? Adjust your depth. Slice backhands tend to be played farther forward (closer to the net, lower) than topspin shots (farther back, higher). Angled shots tend to be shorter, middle shots deeper.

In doubles, you may be playing one player whose balls land deep, and one whose balls land shorter. Volleys tend to land shorter (and lower), than groundstrokes, and way shorter (and lower) than lobs. Adjust your position depending on who is hitting the ball, and which shot they are playing.

Payoff. This is a form of anticipation that is often overlooked. Often, we anticipate side to side (hit them an angle, and you will probably get an angle back, middle shots tend to come back in the middle) but we don't adjust for their average depths. We're missing big clues that would enhance our positioning and performance. We all play better when we are on balance and in control. Good positioning makes this happen more often, thus making us much better players.

Keep adjusting your depth of field. Again, Nadal is famous for standing back by the fence, but if he hits a really strong shot, and expects his opponent is going to have trouble with it (hit a weak shot), he moves in near the baseline and anticipates a different depth of field.

Closer is better. Here is another idea to help with this depth of field. With the more modern, vertical, topspin-type strokes, it is easier to play a ball backing up, than moving forward. The hardest shots in tennis are the balls that are soft, easy and in front of us. To move up to the ball often takes 2-3 steps (sometimes more), while backing up for a ball at our feet is often done in one step. Most pros step back to play the ball, not step forward or into it, that is a big clue. When you are adjusting your dept of field, if anything, error on the side of being too close, rather than too deep.



Let's say you are standing just inside the baseline, which is 39 feet off the net. If most of your opponent's balls are at the ideal depth to hit between 32 and 36 feet off the net. It would be better to stand up around 33-34 feet off the net, and have to move back some of the time, than to be back at 39 or 41 feet, and almost always having to move forward. You are just making tennis so much more difficult by being too far back.

Why would we stand so far back? Well, we don't like to be rushed (time). Add to that, we move forward better than we move back. So that is why. But the problem is, we have to face to the side to hit ("The ball goes back and forth but

the play is to the side" – Tom Stowe). It's much easier staying sideways moving back, than moving forward. So as tempting as it is to stand back and give yourself more time, stand up instead and reduce the space you have to cover.

Of course, being up closer means being occasionally overpowered (we hate that) by their best shots (the ones that are at the ideal height at 41 feet off the net or even deeper), but we are doing to do much better on their average and even poor shots. And if we like winning, we should be trying to do better on their average and poor shots, and not their best shots. We'll do our best on the tough ones, but at the end of that day, they will get a few past us. Say "nice shot" and move on. We don't want to overreact to the exceptions, or highlights in life. Defend their average, normal shots.

Attacking. This depth of field idea is particularly important for players who like to attack or hit with power. If you take a good stroke, and add power to a shot, you better be up next to it. Reaching forward will make it very difficult to make a power shot. Same is true once the ball loses its forward momentum and starts to fall rapidly (right before the first or second bounce). This is why putting away an easy shot is so difficult (The "3.5 sitter" the "easy" second serve). You want to drive these shots forward, not reach out and hit them up. The ideal contact point on a short ball is "top of the hop" (see FIG. A). We tend to hit them too far in front of us and either roll them in the net or blast them long. You have to get up next to these "easy" shots (misnomer, these are actually the "hardest" shots in tennis).

In addition, attacking in tennis is primarily about taking the opponent's time away. Not giving them enough time to get to the ball, or to play their shot (overpower them). We can do this by hitting harder, or being closer to them, or a combination of the two. Why not step up to the closest depth of field that works, that we can make the shot in, to take their time away. If you're 5 feet farther back, you might have to hit the ball 15-20% harder to make up for that 5 feet.

Winter Rules. In the colder weather, the ball does not bounce nearly as much, so it tends to move slower, land shorter, and not bounce as high. In the winter, move your ideal depth of field forward, back in the hotter summer.

Conclusion: We can't cover the entire court, but we can prepare for what is most likely to happen in any given instance. We look for the ball to land where our opponent normally hits it. Of course, if we play someone all the time, we have a much better sense of where that is, but we can develop that sense as a match goes on against someone we are playing for the first time. Opponents may change strategy mid match, and thus requiring us to adjust our depth of field. A player that is confident tends to hit deeper than one who is afraid or choking. Another adjustment to make as the match plays out. Keep your eyes open, your mind focused and your feet moving. Good luck out there!

The Nature of Excellence, Mastery

Everything You Need, Nothing That You Don't

When we observe elite athletic performance, whether it is Roger Federer, or Steph Curry, there is a smoothness, a calmness, and ease, and yet an explosive power to the moves. They seem almost in slow motion, but unbelievably quick. The moves are subtle but create great power. Just imagine, to play a forehand on the dead run or shoot a basketball from half court and make it feel / look like a 10-footer. The same could be said for an artist, or a very good businessperson. There is efficiency, appropriateness of action. In the flow – satori -- one with what you are doing. There are no wasted steps, plus the ability to get to the heart of the matter, the solution, the key to success.

I love the Albert Einstein quote on the subject. "You want it to be simple, but not too simple."

If we think in terms of a tennis stroke, you want everything you need, and nothing that you don't. If a move or motion, an idea or feeling, helps with the end product, keep it. If that extra wiggle makes it harder to be consistent, or hit with power, or accuracy, get rid of it. We want to find the pure essence of what makes our strokes work.

I was teaching the other day, with my teaching cart next to me, and my student was practicing volleys. I fed her a ball, and she moved and timed it just right. The ball rocketed over the net, and before I could even move, it hit the edge of the basket, and rebounded back towards her, going past her before she could even think of reacting. An opponent couldn't have hit a better ball if they tried. The ball had hit the cart edge in just the right place, so that when it rebounded, it went back just the way it would go if someone played the shot. It was an eye-opening experience, because the power already on the ball was enough to send it back over the net and past the player. The basket is not a racquet (a trampoline) and it was not moving (no stoke), so it added no power to the shot, and yet there was plenty of power already in the system to overpower the player. Of course, there were very few places on the basket where she could have hit the ball and have it bounce back that way. It was the aiming part that was problematic and rare.

What this incident tells us is power is not the issue. Power is not our job, there is plenty of power already in the system (and we have a racquet, a trampoline, so we already have more power than the teaching cart). Our primary job is aiming and adding spin (to help us control the ball). If we can hide our intentions (deception), then even better.

Think how much time, focus and energy we put into adding power to the ball. The power is already there, most of the time. It's a waste of focus, energy, effort and a game of diminishing returns. The harder we try, the more we add, the worse it gets. More isn't better, better is better. Only on the serve is the ball isn't moving and we create the force.

On that running forehand, Federer takes the steps he needs to arrive at the ball right on time, where the momentum of his movement contributes to the force he applies to the ball. He places his racquet in a way that causes a connect with the incoming ball, a catch on the strings. He rotates his arm, so the strings move the ball towards the target, and then he releases the ball in such a way that it spins as it heads towards his intended target and therefore controls the bouncing nature of the ball, taking it up over the net, and then down into the court before it goes too far. Artistry.