



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

Hit and Fit

It's the time of year for exercise. We're all trying to recover from the holidays and the winter-time snacks and hibernation instincts. The Club has two great weekly exercise classes. Hit and Fit is a combination of tennis drills (The Hit) and a TRX workout (The Fit). On wet and rainy days, we do Fit No Hit (TRX only) in the Clubhouse. Join us and get in shape this spring! The schedule is:

- Friday 10:30-12 noon (now an hour and a half by popular demand!)
- Saturday 7:30-9 a.m.

The cost is \$20 per class, per person. To register, just shoot Keith an e-mail, keith@orindawoodstennis.com. Drop-ins are allowed, if there's room.

Definition:

Real Tennis Players, Suburban Legend?

For years I have joked about "real tennis players." Players that do something a little out of the ordinary, or brave (foolish???) to get their tennis in. So this month, I would like to take a crack at some of the possible definitions of a "real tennis player." Tongue in cheek, of course. And I'm not encouraging these behaviors, but we do love our tennis, and some of us will get out there in a snow storm. Ok, maybe not quite that... desperate.

- The "classic" real tennis player is one who plays on a court that is "not entirely dry." Is "damp" overstating it? Sometimes we even see players on a "wet" court. Call them crazy, but they are real tennis players.

Some other scenarios where we see real tennis players:

- A real tennis player, who on a damp, cool, moist morning, is out there with towels and leaf blower trying to get the courts dry enough to play on (make them less "wet" and more "just damp", in other words).

- A real tennis player is out there when it is below 40 degrees. The lower the temperature, the more real we are. Or the more "real" it feels.

- A real tennis player plays when there is a gale force warning in effect, and their hat is somewhere over by court 1, last seen flying east towards Walnut Creek. "Serve 'em up!" ("Good luck with that toss, old sport").

- Different season, but a real tennis player plays when it is over 100 degrees. Call them stupid, or dehydrated, but they are out there sweating bullets and whacking balls.

- A real tennis player, with a broken foot, gets out on an office chair and takes their lesson on four wheels (true story), working the strokes, still living the dream. Always living the dream.

- A real tennis player, when it starts to sprinkle, calls it "a momentary shower", and plays a couple more games before giving in to a driving rain storm. If it never pours, they never stop. Simple as that.

- A real tennis player would never cancel a game because the forecast was for rain (see below). They wait for reality, then just might pretend it just ain't so if reality is behaving unfavorably.

- And finally, a real tennis player changes their tennis plans to fit into dry parts of the day. If they have a game at 9, and its wet, they

New Babolat Racquets

The pro shop has the full line of Babolat racquets for you to try out, including the new Pure Aero, "ultimate spin". Demos available. Check one out today!

Reminder:

Square Payment for Private Lessons

Don't forget, we are no longer taking cash for lessons, just check, debit / credit cards. Guest fees, club events and clinics still take cash.

Used Ball Drop

In the past year we have recycled well over 20 boxes of used tennis balls!

Recycling tennis balls has been a long time coming, but it is here now, and we appreciate you dropping off your used balls in our recycling bins.

Recycle bins are located by the front door, both inside and outside. Thank you!

League Action.

This winter we have four USTA teams (40AW3.5, 40AW4.0, 40AW4.0 daytime and 40AW4.5+) and Spring league team, and three BALL teams. It's busy out there, but lots of members are enjoying league play.

USTA matches are on the weekends starting at 11 a.m., and Spring and BALL matches are on Mondays and Friday mornings. The USTA daytime 40AW4.0 plays its home matches on Tuesdays at 10:30 (not every Tuesday). League matches use three courts (4-6). All this action stops about the beginning of April, and then the USTA adult league kicks in.

Quote of the Month:

"Peace is not about silence, it is not a place without trouble or fear. Peace is standing in the middle of chaos and finding the calm in your heart."

reschedule for 1:15. Lunch date, hair appointment, bridge game, golf tee time, ... cancel it. Tennis rules! (Naturally).

If you are not a real tennis player by the definitions offered above, that may explain your high score on the intelligence test, but those real tennis players sure look like they are having fun. Party on and serve 'em up! "Wind? What wind?"

Know Your Weather Reports

Part of being a real tennis player is knowing your weather reports. Can you "read" a weather report? What it really means? It's tricky. Believe me, I practice a lot, and I have some ways to go to mastery.

For example, if you have an iPhone, and you click on the weather app, it will show RAIN if there is any chance (5%) of rain, anytime during the day. Not really helpful, if you ask me, and you are wondering if your 10 a.m. game is on or off.

Second, long-range weather reports, several days in advance, will show it raining all day long, but as that day grows closer, they refine that to just a part of the day where it will rain. This makes sense, as they can see a storm will be passing through a week out, but they don't know what time of day it will be, so they say it will rain all day. But it seldom does. Once the storm gets closer, the forecasters can tell more accurately what part of the day it will rain. It is seldom an entire day is washed out.

All this is to say that don't cancel your tennis plans too far in advance. It drives me crazy when someone says, it's going to rain every day next week. It may rain a lot next week, but there are clearly going to be dry times to play tennis (see real tennis player above). Unless, of course, there isn't. One must have a sense of humor.

The world has gotten so busy, we have so many plans, that we want to know what we are doing next week and schedule our time. Soon the plans start to run our lives. Plans should be a tool to make our life better, easier, and not a master. We get dependent on plans, and we miss out on a lot of dry court time (metaphor for life).

Weather is a great reminder (better than earthquakes or firestorms) that no matter how much we like to think we are in control, we're not. And we're not really good at predicting the future either. Don't miss the lesson. Blessings.



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Tennis Tip:

Over the Net, Into the Court

The primary problem in tennis is to get the ball over the net. (assuming you have contacted the ball, I suppose – we'll leave that for another day). And truthfully, it isn't that hard to send the ball over the net, so why don't we every time?

Of course, we're afraid of hitting the ball up too much, and having it go long. (nightmare scenario: over the fence?) As a result, we try to keep the ball low to prevent this, sometimes too low, and the ball goes in the net. Clearly this method of keeping the ball in by hitting it low has some real flaws.

The Ups and Downs. In tennis we have a sport where we need to hit the ball up on most shots (including the serve), have it go over the net, and then make sure it falls back down into the court before the ball travels too far, and goes either long or wide. A couple of months ago, we talked about gravity, and how that brings the ball back down to earth. And how if we add spin, we can increase or decrease the effects of gravity by using aerodynamics.

Elite Tennis. In a sense, elite tennis is pretty simple: get the ball up over the net and control the length with spin. That's how the best players play.

The other method is to get the ball up over the net and control the length with how much speed there is (so gravity can overcome the speed and pull the ball back to earth). A lob would be an extreme example, way over the net, not very much speed. The other option is to hit the ball up, but not very far up, or very fast.

Of course, height and speed are factors with the best players as well, but it is spin that makes them able to hit with more speed, and keep the ball in, than someone who is just relying on gravity and air resistance alone. Huge advantage.

Contact. To be more specific and helpful, we want to contact the ball on the lower part of the ball, the underside, and contact it in a way that it spins (backwards, forwards, or sideways) so that rotation assists gravity in keeping the ball in (controlling the length of its flight). Of course, controlling the length of flight can also be about tactics, like hitting short for a drop shot, deep for a lob, or place the ball at a net person's feet.

Someone who uses spin well, can actually clear the net by a lot, and still have the ball come down safely within the lines. This gives this player more margin for error, and means they are less likely to hit the ball in the net, or out. The ultimate example of that is Mr. Nadal. Sounds like a winner to me.

What we are trying to develop is a system that works almost all the time. A system where if you get the ball over the net (the primary problem), you will have confidence that the shot will stay in (the secondary problem), because you always spin it. Your mantra: "Spin for in."

To lift the ball and produce the spin we desire, we need to be aware of, and execute the three phases of contact. We catch the ball, drive the ball, and release the ball. The catch, or initial contact with the ball should be light, soft, slow, much like catching a ball with your bare hands. The ball seems to stop the forward movement of the strings. On a topspin shot, you would contact ("touch") the ball on the low inside (an indirect contact). This is followed by the drive, where our racquet rotates to the back of the ball (strings pointing in the direction we want the ball to go) and we drive or apply force (leverage) to the back of the ball. The force is mostly from the nature of the racquet (trampoline), leverage and the rotation of the strings into alignment (torque) -- facing the court -- not from swinging forward. The release is when the racquet continues its inside out (for topspin) path, exiting the contact on the high outside of the ball as it raps around the ball. The strings roll off the ball, the ball rolls off the strings. Ideal contact is not solid, but one where you feel like you are catching and throwing the ball. The strings dig into the felt, and grip the ball, so the upward and outward movement cause the ball to roll. The strings feel like they are slipping off the ball, or the ball is being slung or thrown forward, never hit.

For underspin, the process is the reverse, with the racquet strings starting on the high outside part of the ball for the catch, to the back for the drive, to the low inside for the release. How much of each contact is catch, drive and release vary depending on what type of shot you are trying to do. Very little drive on a drop shot, for example, much more on an overhead (a "flatter" shot). But there is always some catch, some drive, some release. Thus, some spin.

Topspin causes the ball to drop, underspin to rise. For elite players, on a topspin shot the ball often leaves faster than it arrived, while on the underspin it usually leaves going slower. In baseball and driving in golf, underspin is the spin of choice because it tends to make the ball go farther. To carry. In tennis, underspin is great for playing a shot where you can't get your body behind it, say on the run playing a defensive shot (the spin will help the ball carry back to the other baseline), or for volleys, where I want the ball to go up over the net, but be slow enough that it will sit back down before it crosses the line (similar to a chip shot in golf). Drop shots and lobs also employ underspin for control. Topspin is better for shots where I want to add speed, because I can hit the ball up over the net, and you want the ball to drop quickly, so it won't go too far. Topspin dives down, underspin carries, lifts and then floats down, or sits down. Depending on the upwards angle of the strings and the direction of the release, underspin shots can sit up, or stop when they bounce, or skid forward. Versatile.

In conclusion, the more skilled players are going to use spin to keep the ball in and make the primary job to make sure they get the ball up over the net. Hitting the ball in the net is about the worst thing that can happen in tennis. You give your opponent no chance to miss their next shot if you don't make yours. Even if you hit it long, they may hit it. If the ball goes long, don't aim lower, just add more spin. You may actually hit "harder." Use spin to keep your ball in. Good luck out there!

The Mental Game: Playing the Percentages

The Long Odds

One of the big challenges of playing a match is keeping the faith in your game and strategy when the opposition seems to keep winning points against the odds. For example, if your partner serves to the backhand on the add side, at least 90% of the balls will be hit cross court, maybe more. But as you prepare for the next point, they just made two backhands down the line for winners. It's low percentage, and they made them. It's a fact. Potentially frustrating. What do I do about that?

The Hot Hand. There was a famous statistical study done a few years back on the "myth of the hot hand." It goes like this: say a player in basketball makes 45% of shots for the season. He is playing a game and he has a "hot hand," and has made 4 of his last 5 shots. His teammates try to get him the ball, because he has the "hot hand" and is more likely to make the next basket. Not true. His chance of making the next shot is 45%. Statistically, there is no such thing as a hot hand. If he missed 4 of the last 5, his chances on the next shot are 45%. No "cold hand" either.

Statistical anomalies happen. The larger the sampling, the more likely the percentages, the correct strategy will pay off, but in a small sample, say a single service game, or even set, in tennis, you could get some low percentage shots coming through at a higher rate than would be expected. The opponent is "on" their game. Hot. Lucky.

Where does this leave us with playing, strategy, and preparation? What do I cover?

Weekly Lessons

Hit and Fit:

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

Friday 10:30-12:00 noon \$20
Saturday 7:30-9 a.m. \$20

Tuesday Ladies' Clinic:

Tuesdays at 9:30 \$5

Thursday Men's Clinic:

Thursdays at 9:30 \$5

The men's and women's clinics are drop-in. Register for Hit and Fit by e-mailing Keith you are attending.

Our best chance is to follow the percentages. If the ball goes cross court 90% of the time, much better to prepare for that, cover that, than to try to cover all the possibilities, which of course, is impossible. You can't cover the down the line, the middle and the lob all at once. You're not three people. The best strategy is to choose to cover one.

Which one? Ask two questions? Which shot is the most likely? Which ball gets by you the fastest?

On a slower ball, you could be "wrong" and still have time to get it. Base your positioning on which shot is most like, and which one gets by you the quickest. Hopefully they are the same. If they are not, I would go back to the most likely.

Back to those backhands down the line. Looking at the situation statistically, a player hitting a backhand from the corner of the add court will hit the ball cross court 1) much more often and 2) harder. True, the next one could go anywhere, but since most of us can't predict the future, we must rely on the percentages to prepare and give ourselves the best chance.

One thing is clear, getting upset when they make a "lucky shot" or a "low percentage shot" is not going to be helpful. Keeping in your "ideal performance state" or "golden bubble" is one of the best precursors of great performance, regardless of how lucky or talented the other bloke is. Best to say, "Good shot," and move on. Even if it kills inside, "That lucky sod."

In addition, covering a low percentage shot, and leaving the higher percentage shot open, is not going to be helpful either. This is one of the great challenges in life. Things do not always go the way they are "suppose to." Big flipping bummer.

Kipling wrote so eloquently in the poem *If*: "if you can keep your head when all around are losing theirs, and blaming it on you." In other words, if you can stay calm, keep playing the percentages, play your game, that is your best chance for a favorable outcome, and good performance. If it goes the other way? Kipling counsels us: "If you can make one heap of all your winnings, and risk it on one turn of pitch and toss, and lose, and start again at your beginnings, and never breath a word about your loss." Not easy stuff. The English gentlemen who invented the modern game felt dealing with adversity was more important than winning. They were clearly not 21st century Americans, but they might have been onto something.

Can I Go Slow Enough?

It's an interesting question, and one of the real challenges of playing tennis. Can I go slow enough? Most people rush through their shots, missing or leaving out key elements of an elite-level stroke.

One of the key understandings that we want to develop as competitive players is that time is relative (I think Einstein had something to say about that). What I mean is, time is influenced by the speed at which you are thinking, feeling and moving. If everything feels rushed, time seems short. You feel late. If you are calm, there seems to be plenty of time.

The key understanding is: there is plenty of time because you are calm. Not there is plenty of time, so now you feel calm. Understanding and living that difference opens you to future success.

Lots of students tell me that "I'm better when I don't think," or "don't think too much." And it is true, that elite performance has an element of unconsciousness to it. But what these students are actually saying, or attempting to express, is that they do better when they don't try too much. Try to force it. Think too much.

Going slow enough that you can see, feel, observe and even somewhat direct many of the individual parts of the stroke is how you can slow time down, calm your emotions (see The Performance Triangle from last month's newsletter). It is like driving a car, I only want to go as fast as I can keep the car on the road. Can I slow down, go slow enough, to be present to what I'm actually doing, and to sequence the motion in a way that is not too simple ("Ahhhhhh, OMG! I'm late! Hit the Ball!!!!!!") and to actually perform in a way that leads to success. Can I go slow enough? Good luck out there!

Winter Junior Program 2019

The 2019 Winter Junior Clinics began the week of **January 21st**, and will continue thru the week of **March 25th**. The 9-week program will be led by **Head Pro Patric Hermanson**. **Non-members: add \$25 (\$15 for Lil' Ones)**.

<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>			