



# Orindawoods Tennis News

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*"I like this place, and willingly could waste my time in it" – Celia, As You Like It, Act II, Scene IV*

## Winter 2019

### **The Tools of the Game**

Well, we are having quite a little winter, aren't we? Lots of rain, and cold days. I'm always uncomfortable saying something politically incorrect, but I wish winter would just STOP. I know, I know, potential drought, we need the water, and the snow pack, and all that. But we also need tennis.

Given that we have no control over the elements, what we do have control over is our managing of the elements. At Orindawoods we have several tools you can use to check the courts and the court conditions.

On the website (top left corner) we have a link to "live tennis camera" page, featuring a picture of the courts. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but sometimes it is a bit hard to tell what the court surface is really like, so Patric and Keith also update the court conditions several times a day if there are significant changes. We also post clinic cancelations due to poor court conditions. You'll find a link to both our Weather Underground station, and to the Current Conditions at the Club. We have our own weather station here at Orindawoods to keep you informed. Weather Underground is quite accurate in their predictions. If you are into crystal balls and weather apps, I also really like the weather app Dark Sky.

### **Leagues and the Off Season**

Winter is a great time to work on your game. Many people are not playing as much, and this is your chance to pass them by, to get ahead. Find those dry moments and get out there and practice.

One of the great ways to practice is to use our great Playmate ball machine. The Ball Machine Club (see right) is a great way to improve your game by making it easy to practice. You don't even need a partner.

We do have a lot of league matches right now, and it is going to seem even more congested as we must make up for lots of rain-outs from the months of January and February. The wisdom of having so many leagues in the rainy season can be questioned, but that is the decision of the tennis powers that be, and not the Club. Check the court sheets to see when there is league activity. We attempt to limit leagues to Mondays and Friday mornings, and weekends after 11. We do have one league team playing home matches on some Tuesday mornings, starting at 10:30.

If you are a league tennis player, be sure to thank your captains, who are working overtime to try to schedule and reschedule matches and line ups. Do your part and give them your availability. The Club and staff are facilitating all this action. Many members enjoy league play!

### **Strategy and Tactics:**

#### **Shot of Choice**

In doubles, all things being equal (which they often aren't), what is the best shot to play? The shot of choice in top doubles is to play the ball through the middle. On a groundstroke, the shot of choice is hard through the middle. On the volley, it is more a question of placement through the middle.

**Safe:** Hitting the ball hard through the middle (over the center strap) is a relatively safe shot. 1) You are going over the lowest part of the net, into a big part of the court. There is little danger of hitting wide. This

### **Ball Machine Club 2019**

It is time once again for the annual registration for the Ball Machine Club. For those of you who already do the Ball Machine Club, just bring a check (or credit card) and we can get you signed up for the year. The fee is still \$110.

The Club runs from March 2019 to March 2020. For those of you who don't know what the ball machine club is, it is a way to use the ball machine without paying the \$8 fee each time. You also get a key to the ball shed, so that you can use the machine at hours when the Pro Shop is not open.

Remember, if you have an iPhone, you can control our machine by using the "Like My Drill" app. There are hundreds of drills for you to choose from. If you don't want to use the app, there is the standard "on / off" remote on the machine.

In the winter months, it is important to make sure that wet balls do not get in the machine, as they are sure to jam it. No fun for anyone.

### **Used Ball Drop**

Just inside the Club House, we have boxes available to place your old balls. We use these balls for the ball machine, and we also recycle the excess, which are cut up and used to build tennis courts.

After all these years of balls filling the landfills of America, it is nice to know there is now tennis ball recycling. Thanks!

### **Squeegee Etiquette**

Please remember to hang the squeegees up after you use them. Leaving them on the ground makes them out of round, forever. Thank you!

### **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". Check one out today!

### **Quote of the Month:**

"The difference between theory and practice, is that in theory they are the same, but in practice they are different."

means you can hit harder, and even “miss” your target a bit, and still get the ball in. 2) Generally, balls in the middle are going between your two opponents, so this can cause confusion as to who should play the ball, and hesitation as well (which leads to mistakes and weak returns). 3) Harder shots are more difficult to volley (and keep the ball in). Especially forehand volleys (see below), which are tough to generate enough spin to slow the ball down and keep it in. 4) When you hit hard, the other players tend to back up, which is not in their best interest (especially the net player) tactically.

So, the shot of choice, the shot you are looking to make, is hard through the middle.



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**Always?** Does this mean I always hit hard through the middle? Of course not. You can choose any shot you can make, AND that is going to help you to win the match. But both are the standards to consider. 1) Often players kid themselves they can make a shot and try a low percentage shot. 2) Alley shots are great, if they go by the opponent for a winner. But if the net player hits the ball, due to the angle of the volley, the return is hard to defend. (often you lose the point). 3) Hitting wide crosscourt seems good, it's away from the net person, but sets your opponent up for all kinds of angles (if they get there). 4) As for lobs, they are hard to keep in, if the ball comes to you fast. Lobbing requires a lot of control, because if you lob short, an overhead is difficult to defend. And too deep is out. So, pick your exceptions wisely.

If you hit over the center from a wide position, the ball goes wide on the other side, where as if you hit over the middle from the center of the court, it lands in the center of the court. On the add court, a wide backhand over the center strap to a wide backhand is a good play. Not as much so on the deuce side with forehands.

**Defending:** If your opponent is hitting hard through the middle, what can you do to defend? Generally getting close to the net is the best bet for the net person. When the ball comes fast, the volleyer must take speed off the ball to keep it in, or hit it down into the court. You can only hit it down if you are close to the net. So, while it is tempting to back up, don't do it. If you don't have enough time to cover both sides of your body, just protect the side that the ball is most likely to pass on.

**Positioning:** 1) Cover the area where the ball is most likely to go, and 2) where the shot can pass you the fastest. Those are usually the same, but the “most likely” is the key. Be willing to lose the point if it goes somewhere else. The truly advanced player “picks their battles”. They don't try to win every point, just as many as they can. This means letting go of some points, to be better on the majority.

**The Master / The Professional** plays the percentages and accepts the consequences (good and bad). The amateur plays the whim, the low percentage, goes for the glory, places high value on the great shot, on luck and the long-shot. Why? Perhaps luck indicates the favor of the gods, or that one is blessed. Or just the thrill. They usually fail. The master gazes down on at the amateur with a bemused smile, win or lose. They know when long-shot comes through, it just encourages the opponent into more risk and future losses. Masters play for their long-term best interests. Just like The House at any casino. “There is a sucker born every minute.”

### Technique Tip:

## The Forehand Volley

Some very good players have said this shot is the hardest shot in tennis. The research is clear, this shot has the least amount of spin of any of the shots. Since spin is how we control the ball, this makes the forehand volley one of the hardest to control. And to master. The problem is not contacting the ball, that is easy. The problem is more about keeping it in and placing the shot where it is most effective.

**Issues and Challenges:** the main issue or problem most people face is moving the arm too much. That is swinging. How many times have you heard, “Don't swing on your volley.” Yet it still happens. The intention might not even be to swing, but if you reach for the ball with your arm, you are moving your arm, and therefore swinging. Swinging adds unwanted force, and changes where the racquet is pointing. That's a big problem, because the volley is about precision.

On the volley, in general, we want the ball to leave the racquet slower than it arrived. There are exceptions, but generally this is true. And we want to think of the volley as a control, or placement shot. That is how we are going to win most of the points. You are generally already close to your opponent, so adding speed is not necessary (they already don't have much time), and adding speed makes it harder to

keep in. Remember, the court is a lot shorter for a net person, than someone hitting at the baseline.

**Technique:** Turn your body about 45 degrees away from the net. The ball goes back and forth from one side of the net to the other, but the play is to the side. Your racquet must have the strings pointing forward, so the tip must point to the side fence. If you hold your arm up, and slightly in front of your body (elbow in front of the midline is key), tip pointing to the side, racquet shaft angled about 120 degrees out from your forearm, racquet head above the wrist, you have it. Now the only move is from the shoulders, slightly moving the entire shoulder forward (not the arm). This move will pull the racquet slightly down and in, across the face of the oncoming ball. This direction of movement will produce underspin.

Remember, spin is for control, to slow the ball down. The amount of spin is largely determined by how much bevel you have in the racquet face. Lower balls, more bevel, more spin. Swinging forward too much and pulling down too much are common mistakes. Just a slight move of the shoulder. Just a few inches. From 45 degrees to 30 degrees should do it.

## The Mental / Emotional Game

### Serenity Tennis

In the early 1930s American Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote what is now called the Serenity Prayer. The first, and most popular verses are these:

*God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change  
The courage to change the things I can  
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

The prayer was picked up by people and groups struggling to recover from various addictions. Addictions are often associated with lives and situations out of control. And so, the prayer has become a foundation of 12 step recovery programs.

I'm not suggesting that we need to form Tennis Chokers Anonymous (TCA) chapter here at Orindawoods, but there is much to learn from Reinhold Niebuhr that we can use to great effect on the court, particularly in matches.

Not to worry, not all recovering addicts or tennis players believe in god, but the principles of surrender and empowerment remain the same.

Tennis has often been said to be a microcosm of life. A small arena to practice the larger situations we face in the real world. Tennis is competition, this is life. Often in life, there are situations that are out of our control. Same in tennis. For example, our opponents are playing out of their minds. That's out of my control. Like rain, the stock market or bad traffic.

On the other hand, I'm nervous, jumpy, early on my shots, mishitting — these are some things I can work on. That I could exercise some control over.

Simply put:

**Outcomes, Others - out of my control**

**My performance - up to me.**

Of course, my performance can impact outcomes, and the better I play, the better chance I have, but I still don't control the outcome. I often observe when a top player wins an early round match against a player much farther down the rankings how happy the star looks when they win. The cynical fan or pundit yawns, and says, "Routine victory for Djokovic," but the player seldom looks that way. Matches are not played on paper. The "better" player isn't guaranteed victory. Matches are played in reality. The top player is excited that they played well today. And relieved that his opponent didn't play the match of their life. They have dodged the bullet of "a bad loss", an outcome they don't have total control over, no matter how good they are. Life is risk. While it is true, no risk, no reward, it is still hard to get out there and risk. And it's still a thrill to win any match. There are no gimmies. Thus, gratitude is pretty much essential for happiness.

I can find my top performance, and play great, but if they hit a really good shot, I may still miss. It's out of my control. I may still lose. But I can do my best each time, within the limitations of what is possible.

I don't know before the stroke, point, game, set, match, tournament, league season, if I'll win. These are things I can't control. "Accept the things I can't [control]."

"The courage to change what I can" - my attitudes, my beliefs, my efforts. My strokes, my footwork, my timing.

My coach for over thirty years, Doug King, would say the best solution to all tennis problems, the one that had the best chance for success, was to "play better." Of course, I thought, "Play better, why didn't I think of that!"

It's obvious, and we would laugh. But honestly, it's true. How many of us do that? How many focus on playing better?

We get lost so many ways, play the victim on a bad line call, or berate ourselves for missing a sitter, moan when our opponent makes a lucky shot, or get depressed when things aren't going well, rant at the sun for being in our eyes, and the stupid wind for blowing. We're on a mental / emotional walkabout. None of these diversions helping us to play better. The one thing we can really control is our performance. Tennis Professional Brian Gordon said that he only wanted his players to be limited by their genetics, and never by their strokes or performance. Fix what is fixable.

### Weekly Lessons

#### Hit and Fit:

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

Friday 10:30-12 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.

I know, sometimes it seems like our shots are “magically” missing or gone AWOL. They simply didn’t make the journey (“missed the bus”) to the court today, and we just can’t find them. Nothing about our performance seems in our control.

But do we break it down? Step away from panic. From the abyss. Do we look for our strokes? Breath, calm down, watch the ball, loose the attitude, resist dejection or anger, stop keeping score and evaluating our play and just be present. Feel each nuance, turn, dip and lift the racquet makes. The moves that our coach has trained us to do. Just perform. Be present.

It’s fascinating to me that in panic, we forget our training, our best chance to perform, and just make it up as it goes along, doing things we have never done, and expecting that to work. Emotions overpower our knowledge, our strength.

**Tip:** I like to think of a key component of my stroke, and just make sure I do that. Recently it has been waiting, i.e catching the ball, dropping the racquet head on to the ball. The “magic”, the tip / thought, that opens the door to performance changes from time to time. Sometimes you must breathe and try a few things. Take your time, a break though comes on its own time table. You must be willing to lose a few points to “find” your game. It doesn’t mean you’ll lose them, or very many, but the willingness must be there, because your focus is on playing better, not outcomes.

Contrary to popular belief, past performance is not an accurate indicator of future performance. Of course, it helps with confidence (but also inflates expectation – not so good). Past performance is a factor. If you have talent, if you have made clutch shots in the past, there is probably a better chance you will do it again, but there are no guarantees.

It drives me crazy to hear sports pundits say, “They are paying him \$350,000 a week and he is playing like a bumbling rookie.” Salaries (and USTA ratings) are for what you have accomplished so far in your career (and how good a negotiator your agent is). They don’t mean you will keep playing that well. No one knows that. I want to pull my hair, it’s so obvious. But then again, what pundits say, is out of my control. The joke is on me.

**Do you get the joke?** (God has quite a sense of humor).

I was losing a match recently, not playing particularly well, I was tight, nervous, and they were playing out of their minds, making lots of low percentage shots. Finally, at one point, I gave up, but kept playing. I surrendered. I accepted losing, that losing was a likely outcome that I had no control over. But I kept playing. Within a few moments, the tension was gone, my game started to flow. I kept playing high percentage shots (maybe I didn’t quit completely), and they didn’t make as many crazy, outrageous winners. We won several games in a row. I felt peaceful and calm. Empowered.

Did this guarantee winning? No. On a crucial and deciding point, they hit a big shot, their best serve of the match (which is up to them -- out of my control). I couldn’t return it, though I managed to make a good stroke (my business). Sadly, the ball sailed wide. On the next point, match point, their ball hit the net and rolled over. I sprinted but couldn’t reach it before it bounced twice. We lost, but I was able to compete and play well – play in the zone / the best I could -- in a match that in my mind was “over”, “done and dusted”, just twenty minutes before. Twenty magical moments of playing well, of making each and every shot, of feeling peace and calm. There is nothing in life that is better.

**Life Choices:** If your joy is based on the outcome, your life will be a roller coaster of ups and downs, joys and sadness. But if joy comes from performance, it is possible to be joyous much of the time (there are still things we can’t control and may cause sadness), almost all the time. There are people that live this way. We can find serenity.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.* Serenity Tennis. Thank you, Reinhold Niebuhr. Good luck out there!

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## Spring Junior Program 2019

The 2019 Spring Junior Clinics begins the week of **April 8<sup>th</sup>**, and will continue thru the week of **May 27<sup>th</sup>**. No classes during spring break, April 1-7<sup>th</sup> The 8-week program will be led by **Head Pro Patric Hermanson**.

<u>Level</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Time(s)</u>	<u>One day/week</u>	<u>Two Days / week</u>
I	<u>Lil' Ones</u> <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>	Tues/Thurs 3:15-4pm	\$112*	\$175*
II	<u>Future Stars Group</u> <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>	Tuesdays 4-5:30pm	\$205*	N/A
III	<u>Tennis Development Group</u> <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>	Thursdays 4-5:30pm	\$205*	N/A
IV	<u>Tournament Training Group</u> <i>The Tournament Training Group is an invitation only class. Contact Patric about setting up a try-out.</i>	Wednesdays 4:30-6:30pm	\$260*	N/A