



# Orindawoods Tennis News

April 2021

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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*

## Club Rules:

### OW Tennis Rules & COVID Rules

The latest [Club Rules](#) are available on the website.

([www.orindawoodstennis.com](http://www.orindawoodstennis.com), go to the "Information" menu)

Basic summary:

- We require masks on the Club property (like all businesses)
- You may remove your masks to play singles and doubles.
- Please maintain physical distancing when playing, and especially between points, games and entering and leaving the court. Physical distancing remains our best tool (along with having a vaccine) for fighting COVID.

### Guests & Leagues

Orindawoods will be allowing guests when Contra Costa County goes into the **ORANGE TIER**. We are currently in the Red Tier (4/1/21). We will send out a "Guests Allowed" e-mail when we turn Orange.

Members are responsible for making sure they pay for their guests, and that their guests follow all the Orindawoods rules, including the current COVID rules.

Guests are allowed **one visit per week. Half the players on a court must be members** (one guest for singles, two guests for doubles).

**Guest Payments:** Guest payments will now be done by Square Payment, with your credit card. NO MORE CASH payments. We will set up a Pay Station in the lobby, available all hours, where you can pay for your guest. Guest fees are still \$10. To pay for a guest:

1. Tap the screen
2. Select item (guest, ball machine hour, etc...)
3. Click blue "Charge" button
4. Confirm and Pay
5. Insert or tap your card or Apple pay (option for receipt).
6. Enjoy your game.

**League play** will resume on a limited basis at Orindawoods in accordance with Club Rules, guest rules and league rules. This is an ever-changing situation, so contact Keith for more information.

### Junior Program and Social Programs Restart

Orindawoods will begin teaching **Junior Tennis Clinics** in May. The four-week session will run May 5-May 27<sup>th</sup>. We will also be holding our Summer Clinics beginning June 6<sup>th</sup> through July 29<sup>th</sup>. Each summer clinic will be one-week long, you can sign up for one, or as many weeks as you like. For more information, please go to the [Junior Page](#) on the website, or contact Patric ([patric@orindawoodstennis.com](mailto:patric@orindawoodstennis.com)).

**Socials:** We would like to resume some of our social programming when it is safe to do so. We are hoping to do some sort of Monday Team Tennis in the summer. No doubt it will be tennis-only to start with, dining is still a problem, but we are looking into ways we can get people back on the court is safe, fun ways again. Stay tuned! E-mails to follow.

### 2021 Lesson Rates

**Keith & Patric**

½ hour private \$45

1 hour private \$80

**Club Dues:** \$140 / month

**Guests:** \$10 (once per week)

### Weekly Lessons

**Hit and Fit, Ladies, Men's clinics:**

*Canceled due to COVID-19.*

### Ball Machine

Ball machine is open. The Ball Machine Club costs \$110 per year, April 1, 2021- March 30, 2022. To rent the ball machine for an hour is \$8. Reserve Court 3 to use the ball machine. Reservations are for 1 hour.

### Pool Opening

We are looking into opening the pool in early May, depending on COVID restrictions. At this time there would be reservations (like tennis) for pool use. Stay tuned for more info as May nears.

### No Valuables in Cars

Please do not leave valuables in your car. There has been crime activity in the neighborhood. Please use care.

### Quote of the Month:

*"The Master does nothing and he leaves nothing undone. The ordinary man is always doing things, yet many more are left to be done." -- Lao Tsu*

**Comment:** "Nothing is done because the doer has wholeheartedly vanished into the deed... This is the paradigm for non-action: the purest and most effective form of action. The game plays the game; the poem writes the poem; we can't tell the dancer from the dance."

-- Stephen Mitchell

### Ball Machine Club Renewal

The Annual Ball Machine Club starts now for the upcoming year. For \$110 you get unlimited use of the Ball Machine for the year, when Court 3 is available. If you reserve Court 3, you have also reserved the Ball Machine.

For now, we will continue with the Ball Machine being available all day long (6 AM to 6 PM), as we have done during COVID times. This seems to be working, and more people have been able to use the machine. We will also continue with **Courts 4&5 as reservation courts**, which takes off a lot of the need to have Court 3 be a reservation court in the mornings. **In the evenings**, under the lights, we request that there are NO ADVANCED reservations for the ball machine, but if Court 3 is free tonight, you can certainly use “same day” reservations for the machine.

**Please remember:**

- Ball Machine reservations are for 1 hour (we don't want your arm to fall off, and we want everyone to have a chance to use the machine). Make sure **you set the reservation time for 60 minutes**. Thank you!
- Please put the Ball Machine away in the afternoon hours, unless someone comes right away to take over. Even if others have reservations later, don't assume they will show up. Thanks!

Please register by early April to renew your Ball Machine Club membership and to keep on stroking to success. If you have never belonged to the Ball Machine Club, we'd be happy to answer any questions you have and sign you up!

**Tennis Tip:**

**The Natural**

Some people just look like naturals out on the court. Smooth movements, great rhythm, impeccable timing, fluid strokes, a quiet confidence, great anticipation and positioning. We hate them, or envy them, or want to be like them. Probably the third of those is the healthiest response. ☺

**Natural, definition #1.** Our use of the word natural is interesting, because in the example above, there is almost an implication that they were born with it. That they have something that none of the rest of us seem to possess. A gift. They're gifted, like a prodigy. Almost feels like an unfair advantage. There is a little hint of “you big, fat, lucky cheater” in our voice. ☺

And to be honest, some people do have a bit more. My coach Doug used to say, “[They] have 5% more than the rest of us.”

Perhaps quickness, size, coordination, almost a sixth sense of where to stand. But 5% is a relatively small amount. The other 95% is something else.

For the most part, a lot of this “natural ability” is the result of a lot of training and hours on the court. The better you get, the more things smooth out, timing improves, positioning and anticipation seem to come to you, and you look more and more natural out there. Vic Braden used to say, “If you can walk up to a court, open the gate, close it behind you, and make it up to the net without falling over, you were coordinated enough for tennis.”

The rest could be trained. It's that old good news / bad news thing. The good news is that it is up to us, the bad news is, it is up to us. No magic pill or lucky tennis shoes will take us to the next level. We have to put the court time in.

And yet we all have a ceiling to our ability. Some ceilings are higher than others. We just don't want to be limited by a self-imposed glass ceiling, that leaves us far short of our ability and potential.

In a competitive sport, and a competitive world, it is hard not to compare ourselves to others. And yet, the most positive comparison is to ourselves. Are we getting better? Learning new things? Getting more fluid? Using these skills in matches? Becoming more natural?

Sometimes these changes are leaps forwards. Other times, they are very subtle, a few inches at a time, yet steady progress. Are we improving?

And that isn't even fair question, because our bodies change over time (Life isn't fair). I know my strokes are far superior to a younger version of my tennis self, in that sense I'm a much better player. However, few were ever quicker on a tennis court than I was at 18, and there is no way that is true anymore. When I played volleyball in my 20s and 30s, I used to have a 30” vertical jump, and now it's about 30mm. So, our improving technique, wisdom and instincts have to overcome our declining athleticism and energy. “Growing old isn't for wimps.”

**Natural, definition #2.** Then there are the natural movements. The body moving in the way that is best for what you are trying to accomplish. As an example, your shoulder moves best rotating to play a ball in tennis, rather than swinging or lifting. It's a more natural, efficient way for our shoulder to move. In this way, I've become more natural.

Last month we discussed rhythm ([March Newsletter](#)), and there are rhythms to movement that make someone look much more natural, appropriate, calm, but powerful. “Calmness with energy,” as I'm fond of saying.



**Orindawoods  
Tennis Club**

650 Orindawoods Dr.  
Orinda, CA 94563

Phone:  
925-254-1065

Website:  
orindawoodstennis.com

Smart Phone Reservation App:  
PlayTennisConnect

**Facebook:**  
Orindawoods Tennis Club

**Executive Tennis Director:**  
Keith Wheeler  
keith@orindawoodstennis.com

**Head Pro:**  
Patric Hermanson  
[patric@orindawoodstennis.com](mailto:patric@orindawoodstennis.com)

**Weekend Staff:**  
Peter Reeves

**Newsletter Editor:**  
Keith Wheeler

It's a persona, that you can put on, learn, become, live. Again, it takes practice, but flow is a natural movement, that is learned. Sometimes you can short cut a lot of work by just acting the way you want to be. Start playing smooth, rather than focus on technique, and see what happens. You might be very pleasantly surprised.

So, a natural is someone who has practiced a lot. There are God-given talents, that are nature, but so much of being natural is nurture. How you nurture yourself to become the player you want to be.

I have always taken great solace in watching someone like Chris Evert, who was "merely" an above average athlete, and yet was able to reach the top of the game because of her incredible mental strength and fundamentals. Some of that was her natural disposition, I'm sure, but most was how she was raised and learned the game.

And then on the other side, Chris' main rival, Martina Navratilova had all the natural gifts one could have, but could only really compete with and surpass Chris for #1, when she learned and improved her mental game through training and hard work, especially with James Loehr and physically (diet) with Robert Haas.

Of course, you can't change your genetic programming, but you can be the best you can be with what you have. And that is very good news. "[A person] has a choice" – John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*

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## **Tennis Tip**

### **How to Compete: A Couple of Choices**

When it comes to playing a tennis match and playing to win, you have a couple of strategic and tactical choices. Of course, the skilled (dare I say "natural") player will mix and match these methods to best fit the situation. Basically, your competitive choices are:

1. **Hit 'em Off the Court.** Both players play their best, and the player that plays the best wins. A lot of us think this is what happens in every match, but that isn't true. Just because the other player is better than you, has a "better game," doesn't mean that you are going to lose (or that, in truth, they are "better than you.>").
2. **Tactical Terrorism.** Your second choice, rather than play your very best, is to make them play badly. To try to break down their game. Hit them shots that they have a hard time with, or don't do as well as you.

**Here's an example:** If you have a great forehand, but your opponent actually has a better forehand, and your backhand is terrible, but theirs is worse, you might actually choose to get into backhand rallies. Of course, ideally, you would like to hit your forehand to their backhand, but that is not always possible. Playing backhand to backhand might mean the play is lousy, and the rhythm disjointed and poor, you might even be frustrated, or not enjoy the game much, but you may be better at playing lousy than they are, and you win.

**Dominate Player:** The better player is going to want to play a match where both players are playing their best game, because the dominate player is better. These matches are often fun, because both players are playing well. Even if you lose a match like this, you know you "did your best." But you lost.

**Underdog:** The underdog might know they can't go toe to toe with the better player, so they try to throw the better player off their game. Smoke and mirrors, deception, trickery, sleight of hand. Spins, lobs, drop shots, placement, deception, change of pace, lobbing into the sun (the great Harry Hopman's book title) ... the wily game. ☺

#### **Practically Speaking:**

**The Nature of play.** We generally tend to play with people at our same level, so "hitting 'em off the court" is hard to do. If everyone is a 3.5, then you probably can't consistently out play them. Otherwise, you would be a 4.0, and not be playing with them (at least in league play).

**Social Constraints on Play.** Often, we play with people that we like to play with. Part of that is that they play a style that you like to play. Say, "no lobbing, because we hate lobbers". Of course, this makes the game more fun, enjoyable, and they hit balls to you that you like to hit. It's fun, it's recreation, it's your discretionary time, so why not?

But it is also not the real world, so you may play better than if you just drew opponents out of a hat. Even the leagues do this. By playing in a 4.0 league, you know you won't get absolutely crushed by a 5.0 player. And a 4.5 knows they won't have to "deal with" an irritating 3.0 all-time-lobbing style of play (too often).

There is nothing wrong with all this, but the "rules of the game" (how the game is administered and scheduled) tend to encourage "tactical terrorism" over "playing well" in club, recreation and league tennis.

This is not the case in junior tennis, or open tennis, or pro tennis, where there is no artificial controlling who you play. You play who you play. Of course, tactical terrorism still exists, as we witness the careers of masters of the dark arts, like Brad Gilbert or Tracy Austin, back in the day.

With stroking and athleticism elevated to such a high level these days, we see the top players mostly hitting their opponents off the court. Djokovic, Federer, Nadal, Thiem, Medvedev, Serena, Osaka... just plain better. Play better.

**Short Term vs. Long Term.** If you've been around a while, like most of us in these parts, you probably understand at some level, that what feels good isn't always helpful long term. One drawback to tactical terrorism is that you are not really getting any better. You are not pushing the limits of your ability to play well. In fact, you develop a fear of just going toe to toe with someone, you are looking for a way to disturb them or throw them off instead.

In a sense, tactical terrorism damages your confidence. Basically, you are always playing down, rather than playing up. The goal of playing lousy better than my opponent has its limitations, even if you are winning today.

**The Question:** tactical terrorism is a big part of the answer to the age-old question, "How can you have played for 15 years and still be [the same level]?"

Generally, when you do something a lot, you get better. But what if what you are getting better at is dumbing down? We tend to think short term, and what works today, without really realizing the potential long-term damage (or benefits).

I remember in the juniors, the kids that were winning the 12s were not the same kids that four years later were winning the 16s. Those early winners were not able to adjust their “winning” style to the game that larger, more athletic, more adult juniors played at 16. Same later for on as they moved to college tennis. Sampras and Agassi were not big winners in the juniors. But they did OK as adults. The hard part of this, of course is “getting beat” while you are “getting better.” It’s much harder to keep your eyes on a distant prize when you are taking a hammering today.

One of the more famous tennis stories on this topic involved Pete Sampras changing from a two-handed backhand to a one-handed backhand in the juniors. He saw real limitations to the two-hander but switching “mid-career” (junior career) and taking the punishment at the time, must have been rough. He said he wanted to win Wimbledon and couldn’t see doing it as a two-hander. That is looking far ahead, long-term gain, rather than short term pain.

Tiger Woods also famously reconstructed his golf stroke when he was already #1 in the world, because to stay on top, he knew he had to be better with the talent that was coming up.

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### **Tennis Tip:**

## **Begin with the End in Mind**

This is one of the habits from Stephen Covey’s *The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People* (Habit #2), and it really applies to playing a tennis ball, or a match. We want to set ourselves up, or empower ourselves, for success.

When we were talking about the [Rhythm of Tennis](#) (slow, slow, quick, slow) last month, those first two slows are very important for setting up the quick third beat or third count (what we are doing at contact).

This teaching is quite subtle, because it doesn’t say, think about the outcome. It says, think about what you are doing right now, that will contribute to the outcome later. Many of us get lost thinking about how we want our shot to turn out (speed, power, placement, spin, trophy, championship, 5.0, etc...), in other words, we have a goal. This is good, but we need to stay in the process, in the moment, to get there.

**Example:** Let’s use the example of the volley. Say I’m at the net, and I want to drive the ball at the opposing net person. The key to a good volley is to move through the ball at contact, to close in (“closing”), to accelerate my body move, right at impact, to add force to the shot (as opposed to swing for power, which is hard to control). And of course, getting closer to them takes my opponent’s time away.

So as the server’s partner, I watch my partner’s serve land in the box, and the returner move to hit the ball. In order for me, the server’s net player, to hit that potential volley towards the returner’s partner well, what do I need to be doing right now?

Nothing, and everything. I’m not moving yet, but I need a good ready position, hands up, on my toes, focusing on the returner’s contact, maybe trying to pick up any clues as to where the returner might return the ball (stance, early or late, past history, favorite shot, feeling in my gut). I don’t want to be thinking about the glorious volley I might hit in a couple of seconds, because I don’t even know if the ball is going to come to me. I might hop / split step as the returner makes contact to unweight and empower myself to move.

Then the ball is returned. At first, I just want to read whether the ball is going to my right or left and start to turn. That’s it.

At this point, I don’t even know if I can reach the shot, I’m just turning. Even right here, a lot of people get lost, because they start to move to the side, some without even turning, and they are not even sure where they are going. It’s too early to tell. This mistake causes a lot of overrunning the shot, jamming myself, and inappropriate movement.

After the ball travels about 10 feet off the opponent’s racquet, and I have turned, I start to recognize about how far away contact will be (my best guess). Now I have the information I need to start moving. Remember the goal (“the end in mind”) is to be accelerating (with my body) at impact, so I want to measure my movement so that I don’t get to the ball too soon, or too late.

To get there too early would leave me having to stop, to be “dead in the water” so to speak and have no energy. Remember, I want to be able to shift my weight through the shot as I play the ball (that is the desired “end” I want).

As I move towards the ball, and the ball approaches my racquet, I can adjust my original course and speed to arrive right at ideal place and moment. As I get into striking range, right at the last moment, I can pounce forward with my body, so that I’m closing on the ball and my target.

I continue, like a track runner, to move through the finish line (move through contact with the ball), and only consider stopping (and taking a victory lap) after I have played the ball. In fact, in tennis, this recovery is so important, because ... they may hit it back! (How rude!). I have to get ready for the next shot.

One of the things that makes a player look “natural,” is the movements are appropriate, measured and not rushed. This is a wholistic approach to playing the volley, that is process oriented, rather than falling into the trap of only seeing the result I want, and none of the details as to how to get there, and make it happen, one moment at a time. The beginning, and every subsequent movement, leads to the end that I want. Begin with the end in mind.

Good luck out there!