



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

Happy Holidays!

From all of us, to all of you, happy holidays!

-- Keith, Patric and the junior staff

2019 Holiday Season

Reindeer Games

On Sunday, December 15th we will hold our annual Reindeer Games ("Rain-oh-dear" Games) at the Club starting at 2 p.m.. Afterwards, we will have a pot-luck, "finger food" reception in the clubhouse.

If you would like to sign up, contact Keith or John Bockman, and we'll get you on the list. Don't forget, pray for no rain. (An anti-rain dance).

Car and Parking Lot Security

Sadly, we had a couple of car break-ins at the Club last month when the power was off. While break-ins are quite a rare experience here at Orindawoods, it can happen.

In both cases, there was nothing visible in the car, and the thieves just took a shot that there might be something in the center console, glove box or perhaps the trunk.

So not only do not leave visible items in the car, but simply don't leave anything in the car.

I know this is difficult, people don't want to bring their purses or briefcases on the court, or leave them at home, but clearly the modern thief is willing to take a chance on a car that looks empty.

Fortunately, neither of the victims lost any possessions, but they had to have their cars repaired and pay the deductible on the repairs. Plus the sense of violation of their personal possessions and space. Not fun.

The incident was reported to the police. Two witnesses saw the people involved, but not the crime. The thief's car was identified entering Orinda and the investigation is ongoing.

If you see anything that looks suspicious, people that don't belong, let the staff know, or call the Police. And always, be safe.

Tennis Tip:

Doubles Troubles

Reading the game is one of the most important skills we can develop as players. It is often the difference between a decent player and a very strong player. Coupled with shot selection, reading the game (positioning and anticipation) are what give the experienced player the edge over their less accomplished opponents.

In fact, shot selection and reading the game kind of work together, even if from opposite sides of the net. This is "playing the percentages," which we talk about all the time.

Shot Selection: That is, what shot to play in a given situation. Of course there are all kinds of nuance to this topic, but the very basic rules or ideas are this:

1. When you are on the defensive, get the ball back in play. 1.a) If possible, to a place that makes it easiest for you to defend. The goal is to, 1) get you back to a neutral position, and / or, 2) your opponent makes a mistake. This is your best chance to

Holiday Pro Shop Hours

Hard to believe it is the holidays already. As is our custom, we will be closed a couple days to be with our families. The following days the shop will be closed, but as always, you can come enjoy the courts and even play "family doubles:"

November 28-29

(short hours on Saturday 11/30).

December 24-25

December 31, Jan 1

Have a great holiday, and I hope Santa brings you that new backhand you have always wanted.

Gift Certificates Available

If you want a tennis gift for that special tennis player in your family, we have gift certificates for lessons and tennis equipment. While we can't promise their new backhand will never miss, we can promise they'll look a lot better out there.

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.

Water Only on The Courts

Hydration is great, so is staying warm, or cool. But we need to remind you that water is the only beverage allowed on the courts (especially if you are spilling it).

We have had a couple of spills recently, and the stains are there to see. Sadness.

Quote of the Month:

"Why are we honoring this man? Have we run out of human beings?"

– Milton Berle

win the point. Attempting to win the point from a defensive position by "blasting your way out" fails most of the time (sorry, nobody is Hans Solo here). Opponents miss (even "sitters", or especially "sitters") far more often than you make crazy, low percentage winners from uncomfortable positions.

2. When you are on the offensive, you are ahead in the point, you want to continue the attack. Placing the balls where you remain on the offensive with the idea that you are trying to force errors, hit winners or maintain our edge. Playing too safe here allows the opponent to get back to neutral, and "get back in the point" On the other hand, you don't want to make silly, over-aggressive errors, because after all (see #1) that is what our opponent is hoping for. Keep the pressure on / don't miss.



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We have four tools that we can use in playing a ball: time, placement, spin and deception. So for example, if we were in trouble, we might want to get more time by throwing up a lob, hopefully deep in the middle of the court. The lob buys us time, and puts the ball in a place where it is difficult for our opponents to attack from. They might over play an overhead for example, miss, and we get the point.

On the flip side of that, if we are the team that is winning, our opponents might throw up that same lob, and we can hit an overhead down the middle, just placing it between the two players, so that they have to scramble and hit another defensive shot. We don't want to "insist" on hitting a winner, and give them what they want, an error. And, we don't want to play the ball back to them so easily that they get back in the point. Perhaps a bit of spin on either the lob, or the overhead, might make the shot a bit harder for our opponent to handle. Or hitting either the lob or overhead to the backhand side (safe and offensive at the same time). High balls to the backhand tend to force errors / weak returns.

So how does this relate to positioning? In every way, to the experienced player. If our opponent is under pressure, under attack, they are going to play the ball to a safe spot. A wise player will maintain their upper hand by moving to that area, receiving the "safe shot" and keeping the pressure on.

And if our opponents are on the offense they are going to attack to a place we might be vulnerable. We shift it cover those areas they might attack, choosing the most likely, given the vulnerability we are in. So, we can move to increase our chances in each of these circumstances simply by reading the situation.

Net Play. This is particularly critical in net play. If you are the net player, and your partner hits a strong, forcing shot, you can greatly increase your chances of winning the point by asking yourself one question, and then acting on it. The questions is:

Are they comfortable, or uncomfortable?

And here is the trick: We answer this question by watching the player, and NOT the ball.

Look at their body language and positioning as they move to the ball. If they are uncomfortable, they are on the defensive and will play a safe shot. Generally a ball in the middle of the court. Move there to wait for it. If, on the other hand, they are comfortable, they have choices (they are on the offensive) and they will try to pressure you (force errors). Cover the area that seems the most vulnerable (often the alley, particularly on wider, easy balls on their forehand side).

Mistakes and Misjudgments. Less experienced players (that was all of us at one time) often read part of the situation, but not all of it.

In fact, it can become "league group think" at the lower levels. The classic "follow the ball" advice is an example of "a little bit of knowledge is dangerous." The problem with following the ball is that it only takes one of the several factors of being able to hit down the alley into account. The geometry on a wide ball is excellent for playing a shot down the alley. Just based on that, "follow the ball."

But this is where the comfort level of your opponent becomes very important. Because both physics and physiology are very important in being able to direct the ball. The physics of down the line can be difficult because changing the

direction of the ball is much harder than hitting it back the way it came. In fact the faster the ball, the more difficult it is to change the direction. On a ball angled wide, it is hard to make a crooked ball (angle) go straight (down the line).

In order to fight the difficult physics, the player must be very comfortable. This is because the physiology is also stacked against hitting a wide shot down the line. The way the arms are connected to our shoulders, it is much easier to swing across our body (hit crosscourt), than away from it (inside out, or down the line), making a down the line shot very difficult. This is especially true on the backhand. A player would have to be very comfortable to make a down the alley shot. Observe their level of comfort. Comfort is more important than where the ball is.

Net players: If they look uncomfortable, cover the middle.

So what is uncomfortable? What does it look like? Backing up, rushed, open stance, running, not their usual stroke pattern, just plain nervous. Jumpy. When opponents are calm, they are dangerous. When they are agitated, less so.

This is our chance to influence the outcome, win the point. If we let an uncomfortable player get the ball back in the middle and we don't attack it, they may be able to work their way back to comfort, and win a point they really had no chance of winning. Net players often think, mistakenly, that because they didn't get passed down the alley, they did their job. They didn't lose the point outright. While in fact, they have lost the point, by not winning a point where they had a chance, but by playing it "safe", covering the alley and just letting the opponent who is uncomfortable get the ball back in with no consequences.

What if you are not a very good at the net? Afraid you might miss? Well, as the player in the back (server or returner, or the player coming in), I would much rather my partner play their position properly, put pressure on the uncomfortable player, than make the shot. I'm never upset or disappointed if my partner misses a volley, or doesn't put it away, but if they don't cover the middle after I have set them up, that is frustrating. We could be deep into a 15-shot rally that should have been over long ago. It can feel like we have to win a point 10 times to actually win a single point.

And if you are not a very good volleyer? Well, if they are uncomfortable, and hit a weak shot, right to where you are standing, you are going to make a lot more of those volleys than ones where you are not sure where the ball is going to go (because they are comfortable) and you stand there waiting for them to slam it at you, They are uncomfortable? This is your moment! Seize the day!

Tennis Tip:

Flying Solo

Flying solo in tennis is when a doubles player forgets they have a partner and starts trying to win the points on their own. Other names could be, "a loose cannon," or "trying to be a hero", or, more to the point, "not a team player."

Examples of this would be going for aces or forced errors on the serve, instead of setting your partner up for easy volleys. Hitting alley shots to try to win the point outright (but also expose your partner and the team). Playing for winners instead of creating an advantage for the team. Trying to blast the net person, whose in a strong position, off the net. Swinging at volleys to create pace, rather than placing the ball for advantage. Trying to thread the needle to hit a winner, when the smart play is to set your partner up by playing a safer, higher percentage shot.

Putting this in terms of placement, tactics and strategy, you hit more winners in doubles when you hit to the sides (angles and alleys), but you win more matches when you play most of the balls in the middle. Doubles is a team game, and not a good place for flying solo.

Are there ever times when you should fly solo? (Other than singles? Ha ha). If your partner is really struggling, and just can't make a shot, you could fly solo a bit. But keep in mind, this probably isn't going to lead to victory. Your opponents might not be able to exploit your partner as much, but you are having to hit low percentage shots to achieve that, and even if your hot, it won't add up to victory over the course of most matches. You need your partner to win. It might give your shell-shocked partner a chance to recover however, not being under so much pressure. So as a short-term solution, like mixing up your serves, it can be helpful. But as a long-term strategy, not so good.

In general, is it better to support each other, set each other up, and build together as a team. Leave the solo flights for the singles court.

The Little Big Errors

Small Things that Make a Big Difference.

The Subtle Inch. Tennis can be very challenging. You might have noticed. For example, you can be 95% correct on your stroke and still miss. You would think 5% off would cause 5% more errors, but it doesn't work that way. 5% off can lead to 30% more errors. Not fair, true. But the way it is. Just that little bit off can be fatal for a lot of shots.

One of the places I often see players struggle, including myself, is what we could call "the subtle inch". In other words, your racquet is almost in the proper position to play the ball, but not quite. The first part of the stroke is the windup, and we want the racquet in the exact position (the launch point) for the ball's arrival (the catch) and then the release.

If we don't get to that point before the ball arrives, we adjust, often to our detriment. Some people would say this is due to being lazy, or a lack of focus. Others think that swing forward will give them more power. Whatever the reason, when the ball arrives, and it is time to play it, we are not quite in the right spot.

Often our racquet is an inch or two too far back, so we have to move forward to make contact with the ball. This is what players often experience as the feeling of "being late." This rushed, forward movement to get to the starting line causes an unwanted, and unobserved forward collision. This crashing into the ball negates a lot of the spin (control) we are trying to achieve. The ball bounces forward far too much, far too often careening out of control. We still make a lot of shots, but miss far more than we should or have to. It's a modern American tennis tragedy. So sad.

Ball Nervous. When we are nervous about making contact, about missing the ball, about being overpowered, we can become "ball nervous." We pay far too much attention to the ball at the cost of losing the shape and flow of the stroke. You often see players in the midst of a nice-looking stroke, and then all of a sudden, they break off from the predetermined pattern and "rush the gate," the racquet charging right at the ball, at all costs. It's almost as if their focus was on the stroke, and then all of a sudden, they noticed the ball and forgot everything else. Blocking and pushing are the result. Or slapping at the ball.

To overcome this "ball nervousness" we have to convince ourselves that the stroke, and doing good strokes in general, is more important than this specific contact. Think big picture: my best chance of playing well is playing good strokes. Rather than "I have to hit this ball!" (This is short-term, incomplete thinking).

Of course, the more the pressure, either the match situation, our internal mental state, or how difficult the ball comes to us, the more likely we are all to become ball nervous. We have a hyper-emphasis on alignment with the ball.

The problem with over focus on contact is that tennis is not about hitting the ball. Sure, we need to make contact, but tennis is far more than that. We need to not only contact the ball, but hit it over the net, into the court, to a desired location with a speed and spin that gives us the best chance of success. That is a far higher standard than "OMG, I have to HIT THE BALL!!!! ARRAAGH!" That's dumbing down. That's being dumb.

A player who stays calm and sticks to their strokes no matter what the pressure and situation, is a formidable opponent. They are the toughest player to beat. And frankly, the scariest player to play. Be scary, not scared.

Don't Try, Move. Leave the trying, the effort, out of your stroke. At the moment in our stroke when it seems natural to shift our focus to hitting, to trying, to power, DON'T! Keep the focus on moving, adjusting your feet, position.

The most amazing, empowering thing will happen. You'll stop missing and start playing much better.

Tennis is not about making the first shot, or even this shot. It is about making the last shot. Keep playing your game, playing good strokes. Getting in position. Just make your shots, with ease, with style, with no effort. You should be improving as the match progresses. Never forget the law of diminishing returns. The harder you try past appropriate effort; the worse performance gets. More isn't better, better is better! Good luck out there!

Winter Junior Program 2020

The 2020 Winter Junior Clinics began the week of **January 13th** and will continue thru the week of **March 9th**. The 9-week program will be led by **Head Pro Patric Hermanson**. The Level 1 and II classes will be taught using aspects of the USTA Red, Orange, Green, Yellow (ROGY) Development Program.

<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>			

Non-members: add \$25 (\$15 for Lil' Ones).

We factor into the cost of clinics, the potential of two weeks of missed classes due to rain, smoke and other environmental disturbances.

Sibling Discount: 10% discount off the cost of the second sibling. Discount taken off the lower of the two costs.

Inclement Weather: in case of questionable weather (rain), check orindawoodstennis.com for court conditions.