



Orindawoods Tennis News

July 2020

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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

Club In Pandemic Times

Pandemic Times

As we move through these pandemic times, situations often change faster than a monthly newsletter can keep up with. This is one of the reasons I have been sending out e-mails a couple times a week. I expect the situation with the pool, for example, to change between when I'm writing this, and when you read this. Not sure what that change will be, however. So, look for e-mail communications.

If you don't get the e-mails for some reason (there is more than one reasons, sadly), you can find all communications from me on orindawoodstennis.com, just look under "information" and "e-mail history," about the fourth item down.

Of course, the other reason I write you is that these are tough times, and we are a great club, and as a society and a club we need to stick together to make it through all this. I miss our social events, leagues, clinics, and the times we spend together, but we are still a great group, and we send out connect through other ways these days.

And, **we are getting to play tennis!** It might not be perfect, exactly the way we want, but we are getting to play tennis, and that is a wonderful thing! Much gratitude for that!

COVID-19 Club Rules:

The Five Key Things:

- Social distancing at all times
- Masks, wear masks when you are on the property. You can take masks off in only 3 instances (only when on the court: singles, members of the same household, practicing by yourself).
- Don't touch shared surfaces (especially tennis balls, but fences, doors, benches, etc...)
- No guests
- Play and Go (no socializing on the property).

The full rules are available at the club (posted in the glass case and the sign in board) and on orindawoodstennis.com under "information" and "club rules." We're still doing great! Keep it up!

Junior Program

After much debate, we are still debating about the junior program for July. We need to be sure that conditions are safe for the students and staff before we start grouping kids on a court. We have a plan in place for July, we will decide on June 29th if we are going to go ahead with that plan, which would begin July 6th. Check in with Patric.

Tennis Tip:

Footwork Revisited and Enhanced

This month let's talk a bit about footwork. With a moan, I hear, "Ya ya, footwork, move your feet, blah, blah, blah..."

2020 Lesson Rates

Keith & Patric

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

Jennifer (is taking the summer off)

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

Non-members add \$5

Junior Clinic Pricing: TBD

Weekly Lessons

Hit and Fit:

Sadly, there is no Hit & Fit at this time due to COVID-19.

Tuesday Ladies' Clinic:

Canceled due to COVID-19

Thursday Men's Clinic:

Canceled due to COVID-19

Ball Machine

Sadly, there is no ball machine use due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When restriction on shared surfaces loosen up, we will try to open the machine.

Court Washing

We start our monthly court washing in May middays on Friday, the first and last Fridays of the month. Check the court scheduler to see what courts are being washed and when. Keeping the club clean is a high priority. Sorry for any inconvenience this "time out" causes.

Club Emails

Keith has been sending out Club e-mails a couple times a week. He uses the reservation list as his e-mail list. If you are not getting these e-mails and want to be included, contact Keith. Past e-mails are available on the website, under information, e-mail history. A wide range of topics are discussed.

Quotes of the Month:

"I don't have to do this. I get to do this!"-- Robin Arzon

But I want you to consider footwork perhaps a bit differently, or with an expanded view. A bit more than the often quoted, "move your feet." I mean, what does that really mean? A meaning that will help you immensely as players.

There are several phases to good footwork, some obvious, some not so much so. The most obvious is getting into position to hit the ball. And there is a lot involved in doing just that, but there is so much more to footwork than getting into position to hit the ball.

In fact, you don't even want to hit it, in the traditional sense of hitting (i.e. strike the ball). We are trying to minimize the bouncing effect of the strings (which is so hard to control), maximize the catch, drive and release nature of the strings. You want to play the ball. But how you use footwork to play the ball, can really vary from minimal and ineffective, to fundamental and empowering. "I'd love a million helpings of 'fundamental and empowering'."



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If I just think of footwork as getting into position, then I'm going to sell myself way short in what I can potentially do and play.

Two Legs. First of all, let's review the basics. Humans move on two legs. They are constantly shifting their weight from one leg to the other, to propel themselves and to maintain balance. There is static balance, standing, and dynamic balance, balance while moving. Don't tell me a ballerina isn't on balance when she dances, but she isn't standing still. Same with The Fed.

We have been moving and dynamic balancing since we learned to walk. Some people have better form than others, and walk and move better than others (Federer, Goolagong), but we all know how to move around, one step at a time. Sometimes injuries or health conditions interfere with this process in some ways, and we have to make some adjustments, but movement basically involves moving, or shifting your weight from one foot to the next, repeatedly over and over again, as we move around.

In order to move around, we use muscles (strength), fascia (spring), gravity, momentum, and shifting balance.

There is a tremendous amount of force in this system. Each time I shift my weight from my right foot to my left foot, I'm moving 210 pounds. That is a lot of force, considering the racquet weighs about 10 ounces, and the ball is 2 ounces. How we move our weight could have a huge impact on how we play a tennis ball, if I can just shift my weight in a way that is helpful and not detrimental to playing the game.

So, we mentioned that there are actually several phases to footwork. This is true, and also just a construct of the mind. For they all flow together, and when practices well, by an expert (like Roger), it all seems to be one move. An entire point, with five or six shots, can all look like one move. But within this move, or dance, of playing a point, there are different tasks or situations that must be dealt with and addressed. Here's a brief overview:

Phase One: Getting ready. This would be unweighting, getting up on your toes, being ready, or as we say, the split step. It is the ability to move appropriately as soon as we recognize which way our opponent's ball is going.

Phase Two: Moving to the ball. As mentioned above, this phase actually consists of a couple parts. Reading the shot, turning, starting to move, adjusting our position as we get closer, and adjusting our course as we get closer so that we get in the precise position to execute the shot. Good enough. This often where we stop when thinking of foot work. But footwork can be so much more:

Phase Three: Using our footwork, our bodies, our movement, to power the shot, to be the main source of energy in the shot. In other words, we play the shot with our bodies, and not our arms. We don't swing, we catch and throw. In the old days, we would call this "stepping into the shot" but that is a very rough description, not always accurate. What we are really saying, is we are using our bodies to play the shot. That is more correct, more specific, description.

Phase Four: Recovery. The footwork, the action of moving to the ball and throwing the ball, causes a release of energy. We then have to recover from that and change our direction. We follow through with our racquets for sure, but if we

are using our body to play the shot, then we will also follow through with our steps. Moving is moving, moving for humans is taking one step after another. It is natural that there would be a step after you stroke the ball.

Playing the ball with our legs causes us to move. This is where the recovery, or brake step comes into play. The step after we play the ball. It may not be tactically beneficial to continue in the direction we moved to play the ball, so we need to "put the brakes on" (brake step). The faster we are going, the bigger the brake step so we can prepare for Phase Five.

Phase Five: Moving into position. I've often said that you haven't finished this stroke until you are ready for the next one. In Phase Five we need to slide back to the best place tactically to prepare for the return shot. This position can vary a great deal, depending on how you played the ball to your opponent. In other words, what part of the court you need to cover next. Sometimes this requires moving forward or back, left or right. It's all determined by what is the most likely response by your opponent. Of course, when back in position, and the other team prepares to hit, we go in to Phase One again, the split step, and the whole process starts again. It is continuous, like a dance. Until someone misses.

May it not be you. Or someone hits a winner. May it be you. Or someone forces an error. May it be you.

Remember, all these phases blend together into one beautiful dance, if done to the highest, most proficient level, you wouldn't even notice the change from one phase to the next, but all the elements of the phases must be present to maximize your results. So, what does this look like on the court:

A club player averages about 4 steps between shots, a pro about 12 steps (I've heard Djokovic is even more). Good amateur players. 4.5, 5.0s, are in that 8-10 step range.

Let's count: Split step (2 steps), move to the ball (3-4 steps), adjustment / play the ball (2 steps) recover (1 step) back to position (3-4 steps). 11-13 steps right there. Which steps are you missing? Leaving out? What's holding you back?

Most club players move to the ball (3-4 steps), and make that part of "play the ball," the last step is "stepping into the ball", so 4 steps. We need to expand our view of footwork if we want to play much better, much more to our potential.

So **elite players** continue to move, to shift weight back and forth between their left and right feet. It is a dance, and they do not stand on the court. Club players tend to move to hit the ball, and then the stand on the court. If we want to improve, we need to get away from standing, and move towards moving. This sounds a bit like "move your feet," but you can see above, how you move your feet is very specific to the situation, and not just moving around aimlessly.

Of course, this takes more energy, at least initially. We have to get going, and then keep moving. Now most of the energy expense is in starting up, or stopping, but it does take energy to keep moving. Starting and stopping is harder on the body as well, so players that start and stop a lot, think more Nadal's style, have more injuries that players that tend to keep moving (Federer, Goolagong).

Someone who flows around the court, dances around the court, uses the fascia much more (the springy nature of the body) and their muscles (strength) much less. A ballerina tends to float across the floor, like an elite runner tends to float along for 26.2 miles, rather than pound the pavement.

The idea from physics here is: a body in motion tends to stay in motion, a body at rest, tends to stay at rest (Law of Inertia). You will spend more energy moving around all the time, but it will be a gentler energy.

There is a rhythm at which the legs tend to bounce, or spring back up, that is what we are looking for, that rhythm to our steps (again, as in dancing, there is an optimum beat). Slower or faster than that, and we are having to muscle those steps. This is why elite athletes make it look easy, like they are not rushing, but never late, while less accomplished players are always starting, stopping, rushing, but often out of position, off balance and out of control.

We may have to be in better shape to play tennis well, but in being in better shape, and moving better, we will play better and incur less stress and injuries. We are more efficient.

Basically, during points you move (keep moving) and between points, you rest. In order to keep moving, we arrive to the ball on time, not early or late, which would require much more stopping and starting.

Four Elements. Physically, playing tennis consists of four elements, rhythm, form, footwork and timing. But these four elements integrate together and are not separate entities. So much of rhythm is footwork, as we have discussed above, and form and the timing of applying that form is also very tied to footwork. If we are using our lower body, our legs, our feet, to generate a lot of the force, then the form our stroke takes is a lot different than if that force is just being generated by the arm. You play tennis much more with your legs, than with your arms, if you are playing well. Tennis is a full-body experience.

Connecting with Reality at Contact:

We have three contact points with the outside world. Two feet, and the racquet touching the ball briefly. Everything else we touch is just air. Thin air, not much to push against. These three contact points basically represent two springs, or trampoline systems. 1) The racquet / arm / shoulder, and 2) the feet pushing off the ground. In each system, there can be an action, and a reaction. How we coordinate all that, so that these two contact points and spring systems are supporting and empowering each other (our push against the ground helps our drive against the ball), is the point of the four elements of physical tennis: rhythm, form, footwork and timing.

The moment of contact is crucial, but all the other moments you are on the court must build a situation where that contact is positive, rather than negative. Helpful, rather than hurtful. (even between points, where the mental, emotional and spiritual elements of tennis become more important as we prepare for the next point).

Catch) The first part of contact would be the racquet catching the ball, which is the ball pushing the racquet back into the hand. Hold the handle so loose that if you didn't have the ball pushing the racquet back into the hand, the racquet could fly out of your hand (on a serve or groundstroke, you will hold onto the grip a bit more on a volley, but it should be loose). **Drive)** It is loose so that the ball pushes the racquet back briefly, until the power of the body, driven by the footwork (phase three, above) takes over, and pushes the racquet and the ball back the other way, at first together, as if they were one, joined together. **Release)** Then the racquet head pulls back, off the ball, the ball releasing off the racquet in the process, being flung back towards the other side. A catch, a drive and a throw (release).

Here is a good image. If you are at the beach, and you are standing ankle deep in the water, watching the waves come in. You take a tennis ball and throw it at the face of an incoming wave, the ball hits the wave, and seems to stick, or hang there for a moment (like a surfer does, actually), then the wave pushes forward and moves the ball (or the surfer) towards the beach, as the wave rolls and breaks ("tubular, man"). The ball doesn't stop the wave, the wave catches the ball (or the surfer) and then moves them towards the shore. The wave wins. We want to be the wave.

In tennis, it is an energy wave, not a wall of water, but it is a wave just the same. Be the wave, time the break.

The ball is so small compared to the wave. Just like the tennis ball is nothing compared to your weight, if you arrange your weight up properly. Get it moving in the right direction: i.e. footwork. Plus, rhythm, form and timing. The timing is the timing not of the contact, which the ball takes care of (the ball comes to you, to the wave -- one of the biggest misunderstandings in tennis, btw), but the timing of the movement of the wave, the roll of the wave. Footwork, shifting your weight from one foot to the other.

Of course, in tennis, we release the ball. The wave at the beach holds on to the ball and propels it into the water below. We let go of the ball by following through, or moving our racquet to a finish point, away from the ball, away from the target. We release our contact with one of the three surfaces we can push against (often when pushing against the ground, elite players lose their connection with the ground as well, they push so hard, i.e. they jump). The way we release the ball with the racquet, with a roll, creates not only speed, but spin. It is through this spin and speed, generated from the ground, up through the body, out into the arm, down the racquet and out onto the ball, our other connection with the physical world, that we are able to play tennis. It is a brief connection with the ball, but it sure can lead to a lot of fun. Good luck out there.

Tennis Tips from Rumi:

Who knew Rumi was such a great tennis player, coach and strategist. But just read below and see if you don't agree. It's all there:

"You think because you understand 'one' you must also understand 'two', because one and one make two. But you must also understand 'and'." (Maybe the best doubles lesson I have ever heard—KW)

"All people on the planet are children, except for a very few. No one is grown up except those free of desire."

"What matters is how quickly you do what your soul directs." (Listen to your inner voice, the second voice)

"If in the darkness of ignorance, you don't recognize a person's true nature, look to see whom he has chosen for his leader."

"I said: What about my eyes?

He said: Keep them on the road.

I said: What about my passion?

He said: Keep it burning.

I said: What about my heart?

He said: Tell me what you hold inside it?

I said: Pain and sorrow.

He said: Stay with it. The wound is the place where the Light enters you."

"Do not feel lonely, the entire universe is inside of you." (It can be lonely out on a court, but you are not alone).

"Give up to grace. The ocean takes care of each wave 'til it gets to the shore. You need more help than you know."

On a day when the wind is perfect

The sail just needs to open, and the world is full of beauty

Today is such a day.