



# Orindawoods Tennis News

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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.

### **Junior Program and Social Programs**

We are making tentative plans for a summer restart to our junior program. Stay tuned for details. Hopefully the situation in NorCal will continue to improve. We may start with member-only programming, but we will see.

We would like to resume some of our social programming when it is safe to do so. 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.

### **Ball Machine Club**

The Annual Ball Machine Club starts in March 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 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).
- 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 the end of March 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.

## A Year Of Challenge:

### **Take Good [Self] Care**

We have all been under tremendous strain in the past year with the pandemic. Sometimes we don't even realize it, as we have settled in for the "long haul." We are coming up on the anniversary of the first lock down. An entire year, wow. There is a level of stress in society that you really only see at times of war. And wars on your home soil, not adventures in faraway lands, reported on CNN and fought by lads and lasses (on computers) who we don't even know.

One of our long-term and long-standing objectives is to make Orindawoods a safe haven from the stresses and strains of the world, a "place where you could willingly waste your time." And of course, with the pandemic, that was

### **2021 Lesson Rates**

#### **Keith & Patric**

1/2 hour private \$45

1 hour private \$80

**Club Dues:** \$140 / month (no change)

### **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- 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.

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

*"Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy"*

-- Thich Nhat Hahn

not possible. COVID walked right on the property, an uninvited guest. This is a pandemic that closed Disneyland, after all. The happiest place on earth was closed. That's a rough time.

In order to keep us safe, the Club had to adjust this welcoming, open philosophy to one of more caution and protection. More rules, and ever-changing policies as the CC Health Department led us in this fight against COVID 19.

This year has been so painful to me personally, and I'm sure to many of you, to take these measures, albeit for the good of all and those around us. The safety of all had to become paramount. Yet to see my life's work largely shut down, and to see my job change so radically, has been very difficult, to say the least. Much sadness.

I encourage us all, including myself, to take a deep breath (at a social distance, of course), and just give ourselves, and those around us, a break. Everyone is doing their best, and none of us are perfect. And so many of us feel like they have had enough. And yet, it is not a time to be reckless. We need to play this match to the end, to the last point.

Always remember, we are strong. This pandemic has showed us strength that many may not have believed we possessed before this all began. In fact, our years spent playing tennis have made us stronger, better able to deal with adversity. Tennis, after all, is a game of repeated mini crisis: 15-30, 30-15, game point, break point, up a break, down a break, set point, up a set, down a set, tiebreakers, match points. You have to win the last point. There is no "running out the clock." We have trained in dealing with many "moments of truth." Tennis players are tough.

So, when I consider this past twelve months, the friends and fellow citizens we have lost, the disruption of our lives and the tragedy of this situation, I want to include thanking all of you for doing your part, for hanging in with Orindawoods (and America and the World in general), though the stress and strain. It has not been easy.

Now, with many of us getting vaccine shots, and the infection numbers dropping, hope starts to surface again that we are getting through. I have much gratitude that the pandemic did not hit us harder here in NorCal, that it is relatively easy on tennis, that the measures taken by society have largely worked and that we continue to recover and stay safe to enjoy many more days on the courts in the years to come. Many blessings.



## Orindawoods Tennis Club

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### Tennis Tip:

## The Rhythm of Tennis

Tennis is a dance, there is a certain rhythm to it, to playing well. It is played mostly with our legs. And yet to the casual observer, they would say that you play tennis with your arms. Perhaps like dance, most is done in the legs, but much of the expression is with the arms.

Look at the body of a professional tennis player. There's your clue. Strong legs, slight upper body and arms. Not unlike the body type of a dancer, soccer player or volleyball player. You need to be able to move, be light weight, to run or jump.

I remember many years ago there was a Dunlop ad in a magazine for their Max 200g racquet, and their main player was John McEnroe. He wore a muscle shirt, no sleeves and they airbrushed some muscles onto his arms so that he would look more powerful, which looked great for the ad, but was a misunderstanding of how tennis actually works (and a little bit about tennis's self-consciousness with masculinity and power).

However, flexibility (range of motion) and the resulting acceleration and speed have much more to do with how tennis is played, than strength.

Often, we get so focused on the strokes, on how we are hitting the balls, the technique, that we forget the rhythm of playing. It would like to play the guitar, and having the proper finger positions for the cords, but not strumming the strings properly, with rhythm and timing. Miles Davis said, "Jazz is the pauses between the notes." How you put those notes together is what makes the music, the tunes, the songs we love. Same with tennis, how we assemble all the bits of playing is what makes our play land on the "beautiful," rather than the "train wreck," end of the spectrum of playing the game.

My teacher, Doug King, would often bemoan the fact that most tennis teaching pros just focused on technique, and not on rhythm. Or that there would be too much emphasis on one part of playing, and not on the overall picture, the way it all blended together (or didn't). While specifics are important, and the devil is in the details, the overall composition of the game, all its seemingly disparaging parts assembled together into a powerful tool, this is what leads to success and overcoming adversity.

Simply speaking, the basic rhythm of tennis is: **slow, slow, quick, slow**  
**Why Slow, Slow, Quick, Slow?**

In tennis we need to receive the ball before we send it. And we have to aim as well. Catching and aiming require a great deal of coordination. Taking our time

to line things up (the ball coming in, where we want the ball to go towards) is better accomplished when we are slow. When catching a ball, our hands are soft and slow, and we watch the ball into our glove or hands. Even when throwing or sending, a pitcher winds up slowly, coils, aims, before he releases the pitch.

And of course, throwing or sending is quick. In tennis we need to go slow to line things up, then quick to get the ball going back to our opponents. We need almost stillness to catch and aim, and speed to throw. We have to learn how to “move without moving”. And then we slow down, to recover and to prepare to receive the next ball.

**Body Parts.** So, we arrive at physiology. The legs, and torso are relatively slow when they move, compared to the fingers, hands and arms. It would follow that when we want to move slower, to receive and aim the ball, the primary movers should be the legs and torso. When we want to go faster, send the ball, we use the arms, hands, even fingers.

In a tennis stroke, we split step, turn, move and position with our legs (the bigger, gross muscle movements). We then reach out (a slow arm movement) with our arms to receive the ball. When we are in the proper position to catch the ball, and it arrives, only then do we send the ball back to our opponents we use the quicker arms and hands.

Even in how we use the arms, has a lot to do with how quick we can be. Swinging and raising the arms is relatively slow, while turning them, is very quick (see [The History of Tennis in Four Shots](#) from last month’s newsletter). And then recover back to position to await the next shot with our legs and torso again. Slow (legs), slow (legs), quick (arms), slow (legs). (See table below). When the arms start trying to do what the legs should be doing, disaster is quick to follow (loss of coordination and control). “Don’t do your footwork with your arms.”

**Remember:** I need to go slow to catch the ball and aim the shot. I need to move quickly to drive and send the ball back over the net. We want to be moving slowly as the ball comes in, particularly our hands, and quickly as the ball is released. Then slow down to recover.

**Why Do I Forget?** The thrill of playing. It's an exciting game. Fear, impatience, ambition. We suffer from a loss of focus, like getting ahead of ourselves and thinking about hitting before the ball has even arrived. Or we concentrate on where want the ball to go, instead of watching the ball and moving our feet to receive it. There are so many possible distractions that are tennis related, and yet inappropriate (take us out of the process, the rhythm and flow of play). Not to mention all the non-tennis distractions, like “what a beautiful day,” or “look at that deer”, or “Hey, a flying turkey!”

Part of the problem is that to our perception, it doesn’t seem like the legs are moving all that slow, if you are really playing. They are moving as fast as they can, just relative to the hands, they are not moving very fast.

How do I keep my hands soft and slow, when my legs are churning and moving? This is one of the great challenges of learning tennis, the separation of the upper and lower body. How to move your hands less, and your legs more.

Of course, this is almost exactly the opposite of what we want to do. We love to move our hands, and move them quickly, and we would rather sit down or stand than move around with our legs. (The devious, calculated evil of the TV remote control and 400 channels reveled). Thus, one of the great mantras of tennis: move your feet.

Not moving is partly from our ingrained survival instincts: we are programed to conserve energy, because only a few hundred years ago, we didn’t know where the next cheeseburger was coming from, or when. Survival is a pretty strong instinct, about as strong as they come. We have to talk our survival instinct down, the primitive part of our brain, with our cerebral cortex, the thinking part of our brains. “It’s OK, there will be time for rest and plenty of food and water later. Push now.” There is a lot of instinct that has to be overcome to play tennis well.

“Fatigue makes cowards of us all.” – Lou Holtz

#### **A Couple of Details:**

**Tennis is a fluid movement**, with an acceleration. Like a person cracking a whip. They are moving, building up, but it is slow and fluid, almost languid, then a quick movement, that cracks the whip.

**Slow is not Stop.** The rhythm is not stop, stop, fast, stop. Though many people try this. We want to be moving, moving is essential at all times. A body in motion tends to stay in motion, a body at rest tends to stay at rest. The Law of Inertia. Think of Federer, Evonne Goolagong, other graceful movers on the court. With Federer it is hard to tell when one stroke ends and the next begins. It all blends together. Slow, slow, quick, slow....

**Master tennis players look calm**, almost slow, until they pounce, then there is unbelievable quickness. I saw a lecture one time, that featured a video of Pete Sampras serving. The presenter showed with a timeline, that Sampras was moving very slowly about 80% of the serve, and that the whip at the top, was a very small portion of the stroke (20%) but produced the power and spin on the ball. Then Sampras returned to slow. Since the video was in slow motion, it was almost painful to wait for Sampras to actually play the ball, the buildup and follow through took relatively so long, compared to the hit. This highlights our discomfort with slowing down, we want to get ahead to the “important,” “fun” parts. Yet it is all important, or it wouldn’t be there. The slow, deliberate movements created the platform (balance, coordination, aiming) for the explosive movements to happen and have a chance of success.

We've all had the feeling of under pressure, running around like a chicken with its head cut off. That "frantic panic" is one of the worst feeling in sport, or life. Thich Nhat Hanh says that in an intense situation, a ship in a storm on the wild sea, or under attack by pirates, if just one person can keep their head, all can be saved. If all panic, all is lost. Or on the court: calm or not, the match, won or lost.

**The mantra: Calmness with Energy.** I want to move slow, with the potential to explode into movement.

**Intention.** My Pilates instructor always talks about making your movements intentional. Do something because it is the way you want to do it, not just because it happens. I have a habit of dropping my head on some Pilates moves. It is not wrong, per se, but don't do it if you don't intend to do it. Have intension.

Tennis is very much this way. This is the essence of form and rhythm. Everything you do, you do for a reason, to help contribute to the desired results. You want to get rid of anything that doesn't make the contact and release better. These are the principles of efficiency, appropriateness and thus true power and consistency. Thus, the famous Orindawoods adage: "More isn't better, better is better."

**Try this:** To move at the speed of intention is a great tool, for most of the stroke. Go slow enough that you are in control of what you are doing. Feel the arm and racquet coil, create potential energy and move into position to catch the ball. It's only the release that is faster than you can control, faster than you can think. And of course, learning to "let go" for that instant, is another part of the complex task of learning to play well. Holding on, calming down, then letting go, then holding on again, gently... This is not easy stuff to get correct and takes years of practice to master.

**Common errors.**

- Often, we see slow, quick, quick, slow which means you are early, hitting the gas too soon, too long, before you have caught the ball on the strings. If you are rotating your arm, this ball goes like a rocket into the net.
- Or we see: slow, quick, slow, slow (or stop) where you are early, realize it, and you slow down to contact the ball, even stop, but of course now you have no energy (acceleration) to throw or release the ball, because you are slowing down and the ball dribbles in the net.
- Sometimes people are too cautious: slow, slow, slow, slow. This is the classic "pusher" tennis. No power, but often a lot of accuracy and control. You pray they miss your fluff ball, or you just end up a punching bag.
- Or too aggressive, just swinging at the ball: fast, fast, fast, fast. Lots of power, but often lots of miss hits and very little control. You hit a rare, jaw-dropping stunner, surrounded by piles of unforced errors.

**Acceleration** is the key to power, not strength, or swing (momentum). We want to find a way to accelerate, just at the right moment, so that we can go slow, catch the ball, and then drive and release it back over the net. We talked a lot about how to do this in last month's newsletter ([The Propeller](#)).

**The Rhythm of Tennis:**

1	2	3	4
Slow	Slow	Quick	Slow
Moment of recognition	Ball approaches	Contact	Ball leaves
Split step / turn	Move to contract	Contact to follow through	Recovery
Legs	Legs, hands reach to catch	Shoulder, arm & hands	Legs

This doesn't mean that your legs aren't still moving (relatively slow) as you go through the "quick" phase, there is drive from the legs at contact, just that the primary task of sending the ball is shoulder rotation. Energy flows up, from our pushing against the ground, through our legs, core and out into our arms and eventually the racquet. A push with the legs can initiate the rotation and throw in the arms. Tennis is a whole-body movement.

**Results:** I've seen a change in focus from technique to rhythm completely transform players. Of course, you have to have technique first. No amount of rhythm is going to make up for poor form. And poor form is going to block the flow of energy and rhythm. But good form without rhythm is very limited as well, and also blocks the energy flow by being too rigid. Tennis is a dance, and there needs to be a flow to it to bring out the best. Otherwise, you are over trying, using far too much muscle strength and the movements become jerky, miss-timed and less coordinated.

Just changing your focus from swinging and hitting, to catching and throwing, will make a huge difference. Swinging feels like one speed (fast), catching and throwing involves a changing of gears and orientation. Slow, slow, quick, slow.

Far too many players focus just on contact, or connection, or power or results. We need a way of thinking, a vision of playing, that doesn't leave out important elements of tennis and ultimately blends those parts together. Each part of the stroke process matters.

The slow parts set up the quick parts, the quick parts are the reason for the slow parts. Each move needs to be at the appropriate time. The mental / emotional game allows the physical game to express itself. The best beliefs lead to the best results. Good conditioning and fitness allow us to play longer, quicker and more effectively. Good luck!