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Orindawoods Tennis News

Orindawoods Tennis Club: 925-254-1065; Office Hours: M-F 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m., Sat./Sun.: 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., www.orindawoodstennis.com

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

Indian Wells Report

Executive Tennis Director Keith Wheeler and over twenty members of the Club spent a long weekend (or even longer) in the desert at the Pacific Life Open professional tennis tournament in Indian Wells. Here are some of Keith's reflections on the tournament:

It was a hot trip to Indian Wells this year, with temperatures in the low to mid 90s most of the days that we were at the tournament. Sunscreen and lots of water were the orders of the day, along with a heavy dose of very entertaining tennis.

I knew as soon as I walked in the gates on Friday morning that I had returned to Tennis Paradise, as the first practice court I came upon featured Nadal and JC Ferrero playing some enticing practice points. Fernando Gonzales and James Blake followed that, on the same court. Big boys tennis, power on display. The show was on! Gonzales has the most dreamy forehand. The smooth, easy rhythm, aligning the ball, and the awesome power, with so little effort (see "The Stroke" below). I was just in awe. That was followed by watching Natalie Dechy and then Martina Hingis, two other beautiful strikers of the ball. They may not have the same kind of power, but the efficient use of the court shows that there is more than one way to get the job done. The only real struggle was to find some shade from time to time to escape Mr. Sun. Generally, after the long winter, Mr. Sun is welcomed, but we have not had much of a winter this year, and who wants to get fried, even while watching the best tennis in the world.

Day Two, Saturday, turned out to be the "big serve day" for me, as I watched Alicia Molik, Thomas Johansson, Max Mirnyi and Nadia Patrova. The serve, at this high level, looks smooth, easy and hit with the body, not with a great deal of arm. The legs flex and push off, shoulders roll up, and over, and through the ball, while the arm simply turns in the shoulder socket. And the aces fly. The Mirnyi vs. Johansson match featured huge serves and few rallies, showing what an advantage it is to your cause, if your opponent can't get the ball back. It was great to see the often-injured Molik out there, as she has the best serve in women's tennis. For studying stroke mechanics, there is nothing like watching the best hitters shot after shot.

Day Three, Sunday, opened up with some big-time

April Twilight

We will hold our first Tennis Twilight of the season on Sunday April 29th. Due to the unpredictable nature of Mr. Weather this time of year, we will simply play tennis, and then enjoy hors 'd overs and drinks after we finish. Tennis will be played from 3-5 p.m., with refreshments to follow on the Club's deck. You can sign up by calling Keith at the Pro Shop (254-1065), or on the website by clicking on the event on the Club's website. The cost will be a mere \$5 for three hours of tennis fun and social activity.

We will have a more traditional Twilight Tennis Dinner in May.

Cardio Tennis

Cardio Tennis is back in action at the Club, every Monday morning at 9 a.m. join us for an intense, but fun, workout. This is a workout, using tennis as a format, not a tennis lesson. So come ready to run, non-stop, for an hour. There is no better, fun way to get a workout. Beats the heck out of an exercise machine, any day. The cost is only \$10.

Ace It!

Date: Saturday, June 23rd, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Registration: sign-up by getting reg. form on line.

It is time to start thinking about our great Breast Cancer Awareness Fundraiser, Ace It! Check out the Club's website to get all the latest information, and to download a registration form. Registration opens in April, and I know you don't want to miss out on this great event.

USTA League Tennis

The USTA League season is kicking off in late March and will run through July. We have five teams, Men's 3.0, 3.5 and Women's 3.0, 3.5 and 4.0. Enthusiasm for league tennis is at an all-time high at the Club, as this is the most teams that we have ever had in one season. Matches will be played on Saturdays and Sundays starting at 11 a.m. in the morning in most case. There will also be some matches starting at 2 p.m.. For all the details on league tennis and court scheduling, consult the Club Calendar on the website, or look at the posted calendar in the glass case out front at the Club. League matches take three courts, courts 4, 5 and 6, so there are always some courts for open play. If you want to play at these times, it is suggested that you make a reservation, as it can get a bit crowded. The league teams also have one warm-up court (court 4) starting at 10:30.

baseline hammering by Daniella Hantuchova at Francesca Schiavone's expense, followed by the artful touch of Andy Murray. This guy even plays kind of like Brad Gilbert. Sharapova was able to out-hit the graceful Natalie Dechy in the next match, may our hearts be still. Maria may be the goddess of tennis, but the beautiful strokes belong to Natalie. But then in the midst of all this elegance, the earth's rotation stopped, and the sky went black, and the sun stopped orbiting around the earth, as Roger Federer lost to Guillermo Canas. Federer had two set points in the first set, but couldn't quite make one click, and that was followed by just too many errors as he tired to end points quickly to protect his blistered foot. And of course, Canas just didn't miss. How uncooperative, from the Fed Express point of view. Fortunately the universe was restored with a Federer/Allegro win in doubles later that evening against the big-gun baseline Spanish team of David Ferrer and Tommy Robredo. Shots were flying around the court in that one. Two Federer losses in one day would be more than our poor solar system could take, but fortunately the universe was shaken, but preserved.

Day Four, Monday, of the Orindawoods Tennis Tour started out with a little tennis in the morning. I do play, from time to time, you know. Then back to the Tennis Garden for more great tennis (as opposed to my tennis). I opened the day with mixing in the brilliance of Andy Murray's changing speeds on Stadium Two, with looking over the edge of the stands at the doubles mastery of Jonas Bjorkman and Max Mirnyi below us on court 5. Were else can you watch great singles and doubles at the same time? My last match of my visit to Indian Wells this year featured the power, and new-found touch of Fernando Gonzales. What a player, what a weekend.

Of course this is just a mere sampling of what there was to see, with eight matches at a time to choose from, numerous practice courts and dozens and dozens of matches contested each day. Each person who attended would have his or her own impressions and stories to tell. These stories included here are merely my view of Paradise to give you a taste of the action. And tasty action it is. I always appreciate how someone who is very good at something, tennis in this case, makes it look so darn easy. Then you go out and try it yourself, and it seems to be a bit more difficult. Funny how that works.

Short Tips and Observations. Watching the best always inspires me, both as a player and as a teacher. On quick review (more to come later), there are two trends in pro tennis that I saw that we can learn from: in singles, it is a fine balance between offense and defense. Can the player playing offense (hitting down-the-line usually) make one more shot that the defender can get back. Can the defensive player get one more ball back than the offensive player can make. The Federer vs. Canas match was classic here, as Federer couldn't hit enough offensive shots in to overpower the great defense of Canas, who simply refused to miss. In doubles, nothing works like a hard baseline shot through the middle of the court. It doesn't give the net person much time, and it is very hard to volley moving sideways. So basically speaking, in both singles and doubles, on offense and defense, there is no substitute for hitting the ball

well. Very well. Time for us all to hit the practice courts.

As for eating, it is always great in the desert. My favorites were Castelli's, The Cliff House, Makado and Villa Abbate. Of course, nothing beats a hamburger at John's inside the Tennis Garden itself.

There were so many Club members and friends in the desert this year, I'm sure I will I can't name them all, but I will give it a shot. Alan and Joan Smith, Carmen Duarte, Barbara Britto-Tang, Donna Himenez, Gina and Joe Tracey, Linda and Al Richardi, Art and Kristie Haigh, Barbara and Dick Rogan, Brad and Francis Smith, Dave and Nancy Moss, The Gee Family, The Wood Family, Jo Kerner, Kim Wirtz, Lu DeSilva, Penny Veres and the Arlington gang. My apologies to anyone that I might have missed, there were so many of you there enjoying the tennis!

We missed Machael, Wendy and Tamar McCollom this year who were on the Bat Mitzvah tour, and Marcy Sharafian and her friend

Quote of the Month

There are Rules and there are Laws. The Rules are made by men who think that they know better how to fly your airplane than you. Laws (of Physics) were made by the Great One. You can, and sometimes should, suspend the Rules, but you can never suspend the Laws.

About Rules: a) The rules are a good place to hide if you don't have a better idea and the talent to execute it. b) If you deviate from a rule, it must be a flawless performance. (e.g., if you fly under a bridge, don't hit the bridge).

Mary, who were ill and couldn't make the trip. It was warm this year, and the heat was rough at times, but it sure beat last year's rain, cold and snow. We look forward to seeing you next year in the Land Of Tennis Wonders.

The Stroke

We can divide each stroke into basically three parts, each dependant on the one that preceded it. Let's see how this works, first by looking at the old model, and suggesting a more helpful modern model that every top player is using.

In traditional teaching, there is basically the backswing, the hit and the follow through, and while this may give us a visual image of what is going on, it is not particularly helpful in actually playing tennis, or in fact, even completely accurate, as to what is going on when we watch the best practitioners of the sport. In fact, if you look at the stroke this way, you will probably swing the head of the racquet too much, and have very little control of the ball, especially at high speeds. In this traditional teaching model, the emphasis is on the starting point (backswing), and the end point (follow through), and hope everything goes right in the middle (the hit). So you will hear instruction like, "turn, get your racquet back," and "hold your finish."

While many people have learned to play tennis this way (including me), instead of focusing on the beginning and the end, it might be more useful to focus on what is happening right around the only moment we are actually in contact with the ball. In this new model, we still have three steps, but they are quite different.

1. The first move is to stabilize the racquet. There may be a backswing of sorts, but the goal is to bring the racquet into the body so that arm/racquet stops moving independently from the body. Your arm should slot in front of your body (rotate your elbow in, in front of your stomach) and your wrist will lay back (point the butt of the racquet towards the ball). In other words, you are trying to stop the racquet head from swinging. (Where as in the old model, you are bringing it forward, trying to make it swing.) The basic idea, is that you want to slow the racquet down, so that you can find the ball and make contact. The faster the racquet is moving, the harder it is going to be to find the ball, let alone aim (oh, that). So you pull the arm into the front of the body.
2. Now that the racquet is stable (pulled in), you need to transfer energy (from the ground) to the ball. You do this by pushing off the ground (with your feet, legs) moving the body forward, your shoulders rotate (much like an upper cut punch, if you are hitting a forehand), and you give the ball a shove, a drive, a push. From the legs, through your body, your arm, out the racquet, onto the ball. You push (drive) the ball with your body.
3. The final stage we could still call the follow through, but it is so different than I ever thought it was. With all the force from the body driving the racquet forward, there is a brief moment when the arm is released, at contact (the racquet face moves from the inside of the ball to the outside of the ball), and then the racquet head must be pulled back to restrain it from flying forward and out of control. In other words, think of letting the racquet be thrust forward to the point where it faces the target, and no farther. Once you get to that point, it needs to be held back, pulled back, restrained.

So the stroke is a pull in, a push out, and a pull back in. That's it.

The new model is all focused on the quality of the contact. Stable, lots of force, controlled finish. Where you start and where you end, as you can see from the great variety of pro backswings and follow throughs, is not that important, just get the middle part right.

So new and old, what is different?

Besides everything? In the old model, the idea was to get the racquet back so that you could swing it forward, with momentum and centrifugal force (both hard to control and time) so that the racquet would collide with the ball, sending it on its way. The racquet would arrive at the point of contact at the same time as the ball. Kaboom! The two problems with this model is that the racquet is moving a great deal, so



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it is hard to time the connection with the ball, and because it is moving in a circular path, the face of the racquet is not moving in a straight line, towards the target, making aiming difficult. In the new model, instead of swinging the racquet into the ball, you are aligning the racquet/arm between your body and the ball, so that you are in a strong leverage position.

Once this alignment is achieved (the racquet basically arriving at the contact point before the ball), the body (and attached racquet) is propelled forward, driving the ball over the net, in a predictable forward direction and height (since the racquet isn't moving very much, except forward with great force). Because the racquet is much more consistently facing the target in the new model, you can actually move the racquet much faster and still control the ball (this is why players today hit the ball much harder than in the old days; it's not the racquets, folks). This leads to the necessity of a new kind of follow through.

I always looked at the follow through as accelerating through the ball (visions of racquet head speed), followed by a dissipation of energy like a drag racer coasting to a stop after crossing the time line, parachute trailing behind. The truth is, in the modern forehand, the follow through is actually a constraining device. It is a necessary holding back, really a pulling back, of the racquet head, because there is so much forward force (from the body swing). If the racquet was allowed to swing forward, the racquet face would stop pointing towards the target, and you would not be able to control the shot.

All this led me to an amazing realization. The biggest hitters, Federer, Blake, Roddick, Nadal, Sharapova, Gonzalez, are extremely conservative with the racquet head. They pull it in to a stable position to align the hit, and they pull it back on the finish to keep control. They will not let that racquet head swing forward, no matter what. And, with their bodies (knowing that they have a stable racquet), they are amazingly aggressive.

So what looks like huge swings to the casual observer, is really mostly body movement, with a racquet pulled in, thrust out, and held back. So there is racquet head speed, but it comes from the body moving (thrust forward, shoulders rocking and rolling), not swinging the racquet. Amazing. Good luck out there!

Junior Team Tennis

Just like the adults in the summer, our juniors get to play team tennis too. The Junior Team Tennis season will begin on Saturday, April 21, and conclude on May 12. If you want to play Junior Team Tennis, call Patric and get involved today!

Spring Junior Program

The 2007 Spring Junior Clinics starts the week of March 19. It looks like it is going to be a beautiful Spring, full of great tennis with Patric and the gang.

Head Pro Patric Hermanson and our excellent staff lead the program. For more information, check out the Junior Page on the Club's website or call Patric at the Club (254-1065).

Class	Time	One Day/ week	Two Day
Lil' Ones (ages 4-6)	Tu/Th 3:15-4pm	\$110/\$125 (mem/non)	\$185/\$200
Future Stars (ages 7-10)	Tues. 4-5:30pm	\$220/\$245 (mem/non)	n/a
10s Development Group (ages 7-13)	Thurs. 4-5:30pm	\$220/\$245 (mem/non)	n/a
Tournament Training (invitation only)	Friday 4:30-6pm	\$220/\$245 (mem/non)	n/a