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Orindawoods Tennis News

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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

Happy Holidays To All!

Everyone at Orindawoods wants to wish you and your family a very wonderful holiday season.

The Orindawoods family will be taking off Thanksgiving and the day after, and Christmas and New Year's Day. Of course the Club's courts will still be open for a rousing game of family doubles.

Enjoy!

Orindawoods Junior Championships

Orindawoods hosted the Orindawoods Junior Championships on November 8 & 9. Over seventy-five kids from around Contra Costa County came to play in our tournament. Of course we had the usual excitement, a bit of rain, the Orindawoods Squeegee Team springing into full-blown action, as well as some of our local heroes playing well.

From Orindawoods, we had three kids in the finals of their divisions, Carmeron Gee, Cecilia Gee and Ally Braue, with Cecilia winning the Girls 10s! Congratulations to all the winners and participants.

With the exception of one parent (there is always one), this was perhaps our best year as far as sportsmanship and positive attitude about tennis. There were many great matches, and with rare exceptions, both kids came off the court with smiles, and a positive feeling about their tennis. New friendships were made, and new practice partners found. It is great to see so many kids out there at this entry-level tournament play. So often the focus in the tennis community is on the very top kids, and not on the entry-level player. These kids are the real winners, because they are out there for the mere enjoyment of the game, and learning. If they remember that the rest of their tennis life, they can't lose.

Many thanks to Head Pro Patric Hermanson, and all the members of Orindawoods for your support of this event, and of junior tennis in Lamorinda. The kids really appreciate it.

Girls High School Success!

The Miramonte High School Girls team, featuring several girls that have participated at one time or another in our Junior Program and lessons won the DFAL this year, beating out Campolindo in the tie-breaker. When it came to the DFAL season ending individual tournament, Miramonte was again well represented by Orindawoods girls. In the singles tournament, Anya Kaiser, seeded #2, pulled off the big upset, defeating the #1 seed from Dubin 2-6, 6-2, 6-1. Anya had lost to her opponent twice during the season, and looked to be going down again after the first set, but her determination and smarts carried her to a change in strategy, and victory! In the doubles, Miramonte's top doubles team of Anne Barber and Tamar McCollom upset the #2 seeds from Campo (who hadn't lost a league match all year) and then fell to a tough team in the semis, 6-4, 6-4. A semi-final result was a great vindication for Anne and Tamar, as they had not even

Men's Lunch Bunch

The annual Thursday Men's Lunch Bunch Holiday BBQ is on December 4, 12 noon, at Woodhall. Once again the guys will get together to celebrate the holiday season, connect with old friends and tell tall tales. If you want to come and you haven't yet signed up, contact Keith, Page Thibodeaux or Chet Ferdun. And always remember, "The older I get, the better I used to be." Hope to see you for a wonderful time on the 4th!

Reindeer Games

It is time once again for our Winter social, the Reindeer Games. This year's games will be held on Sunday, December 14, from 12-2:30pm. A round robin tennis tournament will be played from 12 to 2 p.m., with holiday cheer to be enjoyed on the deck after that. We have a limit of 42 players for tennis, so don't delay, sign up today. We will be opening up the enrollment to non-members after Thanksgiving, as we have many non-member friends that we would like to invite, if we don't fill the roster with members. Contact Keith or Lysbeth McNeil if you would like to enroll.

Spring League B2 and A2

We are putting together our Spring League Teams for the upcoming season. If you are interested, contact Leslie Finertie or Janis Fujita (for B2) and Noel Pfeffinger or Janet Govan for A2. For our 3.5 players, remember that you can sign up for either!

Court Cams

Don't forget the Orindawoods Court Cams, showing pictures of courts 2-7 updated every 5 minutes or so. The Courtcam is available on the website, www.orindawoodstennis.com. The CourtCam is a great way to see if the courts are dry, if your foursome is out there playing and you are late, or if there are some free courts when you get the urge to play. Think of this, you have just finished a wonderful slice of triple layer chocolate cake, and you suddenly feel terribly guilty, and want to get some exercise. Check the courtcam, and exclaim to Mable, "The lights are on, one court is free, tennis here we come!"

CourtCam Tip: courts 4-7 will appear dark at night (yes, this is a joke).

been in the starting line up for Miramonte at the beginning of the season, and had to fight their way up through the ladder, challenging to be #3, then #2, and finally #1. So that made three Orindawoods girls, one a champion, in the last twelve girls. We were well represented.

In the North Coast Section team tournament, featuring all the league winners, Miramonte played Mission San Jose in the first round. Tamar and Anne won their match 6-0, 6-0, but Miramonte lost a close one, 4-3 to end the team season. Anya Kaiser is going on to the North Coast Singles tournament (played after publication). Good luck Anya!

Quick Tip

Winter Tennis

It is time to start thinking about winter tennis here at the Club. No, that doesn't just mean puddles, squeegees and rainy day cancellations.

As fall comes to a close in the next month, I am sure you have already noticed that the balls don't bounce nearly as high, and your powerful summer shots just don't seem to be going as fast, especially serves. This is physics folks, and the reality of playing in the winter months. Cooler air temperatures, and the resulting lower air pressure in the ball means that the ball just doesn't bounce as high, or go as fast. That means, perhaps a shift in strategy is in order.

Balls that bounce lower is clearly an advantage to the net player. A lower ball is hard to lob, and when the ball is below the height of the net, your opponent has to hit up to the net person, and not very hard (or it will go long). If it is within your skill set, the winter is a good time to come in and volley more. Along with this, the drop shot is an very effective shot in the winter, so dust that ol' thing off and start hitting slow and low. Winter is a great time of the year to bring those big bangers to their knees, and enjoy doing it, so winterize your strategy, and have a lot of fun this winter playing tennis!

As for organized activities, our Junior Tennis program starts on January 5 (see schedule on page 4). The adult USTA season starts to organize in the new year. So far, we are planning both a 3.5 and 4.0 women's teams, hopefully more.

Tennis Instruction

Getting Better At Tennis

Tennis is a game, as well as a skill. The techniques used to play the game are very technical, and take years and tons of effort to master. And yet, it is still a game, with rules, tactics and strategy, which also must be mastered. These two different aspects of tennis make learning and perhaps even mastering the game very interesting, and a lifelong pursuit.

Specifically, how often should you play matches, and how much should you practice, with your limited tennis time, to get the most satisfaction out of tennis?

Of course the answer to that question is very personal, and would differ with each and every player. Some of us are better athletes than others, while others have a real knack for learn. Some are more determined, others clearly have more fun.

So there is a balance between practice (working on the technical strokes, studying strategy) and playing the game (learning how the game works, competing, staying tough mentally, etc...). We are learning very different things when we practice, as opposed to when we play, and both are invaluable to mastering the sport.

As an example of how tricky this is, in my competitive athletic life, I have played two sports very seriously, tennis and volleyball. In tennis, I had a lot of technical training, and practiced a great deal. In volleyball I had almost no technical training, and played games and matches constantly. Not surprisingly, I was a better competitor in volleyball, but I played tennis much better technically. In volleyball, I was eventually limited by my lack of technique (and of course height, it is a game for tall people, even if I was 5'11" and had a 30 inch vertical jump at one time). In junior tennis, I was much more limited by my competitive experience and mental toughness (game smarts / street smarts) than my technical skills.

Of course the third component of this was that in volleyball, I eventually hurt my shoulder, due to some rather poor technique (I jumped off the wrong leg, which hurt my alignment to the ball, and I reached too high with my arm because I was short). So technique counts for more than just success. Survival is also involved.

I recently decided to take up playing the 4,000-year-old Chinese game of Go, and bought a board and stones to play. With them, came a simple guidebook, perhaps sixteen pages long, with the rules, some examples, and some basic strategy and philosophy. In classic Zen fashion, the master who wrote the book passes on sage advice that you "play fast and make lots of mistakes, because you will learn much faster that way."

Quote of the Month:

"Play fast, and make lots of mistakes, because you will learn much faster that way."

-- Go wisdom

This is learning to play the competitive game by playing the game. There are things that no amount of practice or lessons is going to teach you. We need to get out there and try it in the heat of battle. See what works, see what doesn't. Make adjustments. Learn what we need to go back and practice.

All around the Club we can see people who compete too much, and people who practice too much. We can stand on the deck and point them out, one by one. Finding the balance is the key.

I have heard it said over the years by various coaches in my life that you should practice one hour for every two to three hours of match play. Some people do that by taking a lesson, or having a practice partner, or hitting on the ball machine. Some don't practice at all, or perhaps they play "practice" matches. Others do nothing but practice, and never actually play.

One of the challenges is that we have to overcome the tendency to do what we enjoy, or do well, at the expense of what is harder for us. As a kid, I loved to grind on the practice tennis courts. No one worked harder or longer. Matches were tougher. I couldn't control the outcome, and that was a scary situation for me at fourteen-years old. Others love that uncertainty, putting it on the line, and finding out what happens, and hate practice. They want the buzz of the action, the uncertainty, the high of coming through and winning.

When I was older, volleyball was different, it was fun, it was social, and everyone just played. People would talk about different skills, and you would get some very unprofessional help, but really, I just learned by doing it. And I developed some bad habits too.

Of course we learn different things when we practice, when we play. When we are playing, we are learning how the game works. What is possible, what is not, tactics, strategy, how to compete, how to stay focused, mentally, emotionally, physically, how to keep going when things aren't going well, all that stuff. Some coaching can help here, like a strategy lesson, but really, playing the game and "learning the hard way," or in "the school of hard knocks" is important. Essential, really.

In practice we are working on our skills, things we need to know to play the game. Roger Federer points to the lack of practice time as one of the real failings of this year, and why he has had trouble fending off the challenge by Nadal and other good players. He says it is his own fault, but because he has played so many matches and tournaments, he really hasn't had time to work on his game. He is a smart guy. I bet he corrects this in the future.

The things that we work on in practice are skills that by the time we play the game need to be pretty automatic. This leads to one of the biggest problems with working a balance between play and practice. It is very hard to play when you have been changing a lot of things in practice. One of the reasons players don't work on their game, and don't practice, is that it makes them worse. And this is true. You have to deconstruct your old game, and replace it with a new game or stroke. In between, you are often lost, and can't do anything well.

And yet, as Roger Federer says, it is hard to stay competitive, if your practice (or lack of practice) hasn't upgraded your game to the level it needs to be. Invariably, players do one or the other too much.

A wise person once helped me in this area by saying that in all the great resurrection stories and legends in our culture, when the person dies, they come back stronger than before. It is true of Jesus, and Obi-Wan Kenobi too. And so, your old game must die, so that the new, stronger game can be born. This is a fact, if you want to grow and learn. If you don't let go of the old, there is no room for the new to grow and flourish.

When we look at the juniors playing the game, the question of practice can get really out of control. Some juniors feel that they have to hit many hours a week to become good. I know girls that are practicing twenty hours a week (on top of school work), and others practicing two hours a week. And both are very good players. This begs the question, how much do I have to play to get better?

In the American system, our tradition is to practice a great deal. Hours grinding on the courts is said to lead to success. When I was a kid, the word on the street (at junior tournaments) was that you had to play 5 hours a day, 3 hours a day during the school year. I think this is a huge mistake, and it only leads to burnout and mediocre play.

I will point to two legends of American tennis to prove my point, and a few Swedish guys. Both Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe hated to practice. What Connors did was practice for one hour as intensely as he could, and call it a day. In other words, he practiced as hard, or harder than he played (he is an intense guy), and then he would rest and recover for the next day. If you compare this to the five-hour model, you can see the advantages. There is no way you can go that hard for five hours, so you are going to have to go into cruise mode, or learning how to play below 100%. Connors practiced like a sprinter, the five-hour folks like marathoners. Tennis points resemble a sprint (2 to 5 shots, then a break), much more than a distance race. No wonder Connors beat all those hard workers. McEnroe took another route. Since his game was best played at the net, he played doubles rather than practice. It was fun, and he was getting to work on his volleys, and his competitive skills, all at the same time.

As for those Swedish guys who dominated tennis for many years (Borg, Wilander, Edberg), growing up they could only play five hours a week in the winter back home, not the five hours a day that Americans wintering in Florida were hitting. Those Swedes did OK. Think quality, not quantity, just like Connors. And being hungry when you do get



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on a court.

When competing (playing the game) what does your tennis week look like to maximize your potential?

Again, in America, I think we go for overkill. Tons of tournaments, tons of matches, yet if we look at our top players, Venus and Serena skipped the juniors almost completely, and Pete Sampras never won a national junior tournament, and he turned out OK. Certainly we learn invaluable things from playing matches, but it doesn't necessarily have to be high-pressure leagues and tournaments, at least all the time. The grind of constant competition, and repeated losses, can wear you down and steal your drive and will to continue.

The biggest determiners of success are 1) how well you hit the ball (not how often), and 2) talent. Since we probably don't have a say over talent (other than developing it to our own potential) and we must work with what we have, then we have to find a way to hit the ball as well as we can. In practice and in a game.

So tennis is a technical game, you have to learn technique to get very far. The courts are littered with people stuck at the 3.0 or 3.5 level who can't get any better because no matter how good they are at competing, their technique is holding them back.

In conclusion, the best way to get the most out of your time on the court, is to plan your tennis life so that you are getting some practice, that it works on what your game lacks or needs, and that the practice is intense. Then you make sure you play some matches, and learn how the game works, and about competing, and dealing with pressure. But if you ever feel like you don't want to be on the court (bored, tried, unmotivated), it is time, right now, to take a break for a few days, if not longer.

I believe we can be very good players, playing intensely, only a couple of days a week. So if that is all your schedule allows, don't fret. You want to arrive at the court with high attention, high energy, and no expectations. Those over workers are a little bit crazy, and not getting better as fast as you might fear. They could even be getting worse as they get more tired, worn out, beaten down, and lose their desire to play and their focus wanders. Good luck, and have fun out there!

Orindawoods Junior Winter Clinic Schedule 2009

The 2009 Winter Junior Clinics begin the week of **January 5th**, and will finish up the week of **March 9th**. The 10 week program will be led by Head Pro **Patric Hermanson** and Assistant Pro **Philip Laubscher**

Class	Time	One Day / Week	Two Days/Week
LittleOnes (4-6 yrs)	Tu + Th 3:15-4 pm	\$115/\$130 (member/non OW)	\$190/\$205
Future Stars (7-10 yrs)	Tuesday 4-5:30 pm	\$225/\$250 (member/non OW)	n/a
Tennis Development Group (11-14 yrs)	Thursday 4-5:30	\$225/\$250 (member/non OW)	n/a
Tournament Training (by invitation only)	Friday 4:30-6 pm	\$225/\$250 (member/non OW)	n/a

We have factored into the cost of the clinics the potential of two weeks of missed classes due to rain, illness, vacations, etc. **The Future Stars Group** is for players with no tennis experience to those who have played a year or two. **The Tennis Development Group** is for our junior high schoolers and for the younger players who can somewhat consistently hit the ball back 4 to 5 times per rally and can serve the ball in from the baseline. **The Tournament Training Group** is an invitation only class. Contact Patric about setting up a try-out.

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

Inclement Weather: In case of questionable weather (rain), please call the Pro Shop for a court condition update.

For more information or to sign up, please call Keith or Patric at the Pro Shop **(925) 254-1065**, or e-mail Patric at patricTennis@yahoo.com. Tennis shoes required (no black soled shoes).

www.orindawoodstennis.com

Reservations, Club calendar, weather and court updates, lesson programs and much more!

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