



March 2009
Volume 15, Issue 3

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

Pool Construction

As you have probably noticed, we have been working on the pool the last couple of weeks (sorry for the noise and the upheaval in the lobby in particular). The good news is that by the time the pool opens in the late spring, we will have a new pool surface, and a new look to our recreational swimming area. This is very exciting. With the recoloring of the courts in the past couple of years, once again, we essentially have a new club facility (OK, the Clubhouse doesn't count, but we are working on improvements mentioned in last month's newsletter).

Squeegeeing, The Great Winter Sport

We have two types of Squeegees here at The Woods, blades and rollers. Pushing a squeegee is a great workout, tremendous exercise. We have recently purchased a couple more of each for your squeegeeing pleasure. Each type has a different role (roll, so to speak) in getting your favorite court ready for play. The large blades are best for moving a lot of water off the court quickly. Use the blades to tackle puddles and a court that is entirely wet from a spring shower.

Rollers are best for touch-up jobs. A small, stubborn puddle next to a fence (we have lots of these on courts 5 and 7). The foam rollers will pick up some water, but drying a court is mostly up to Mother Nature (wind, sun, warmer temperature, lower humidity). Some people try towels from time to time. Both blades and rollers primarily move water. Either push the water off the court, or spread it out, so Mother Nature can do her thing.

Many players say they prefer the rollers to the blades, and that is because the rollers are better for the last stages of drying, the touch-up phase, and this is when most people give squeegeeing a shot. Most are too intimidated by a flooded court. When you get to the touch-up stage, you can probably get on a court about 10-15 minutes sooner by rolling. The blades can probably make a 30-45 minute difference, but you have to start when things look much more hopeless.

If you are really good at squeegeeing, who knows, someday, you could be a member of the Orindawoods Squeegee Team, a real honor.

Talking Strategy

Two Opponents, Three Choices

There are basically two opponents one faces on the tennis court. They are simply put, people who can play, and people who can't (relative to you). If our opponent sucks, you just get the ball in, let them make mistakes, and you win. Of course the other opponent is the person who is good, and you are going to have to do more against this person than just be consistent.

Three Choices

If you are playing someone who can play, then you have three basic choices. You can hit the ball better than they are comfortable hitting it. That could be harder, more spin, better

Ball Machine Club

For those of you who are members of the Ball Machine Club, or those of you who would like to become part of the select group of fine tennis affectionatos, it is time to renew your yearly membership of \$100. The \$100 gets you unlimited use of the ball machine for one year (March 1 to March 1), within the rules and regulations of the club.

Briefly, The Ball Machine is used on Court 3, so you must reserve court 3 to use the machine. The ball machine must be used before 8:30 or after 11 (after 12 on the weekends). There are no lighted court reservations for the ball machine.

We have recently had the ball machine serviced, as well as repaired the power lines to the court, so the machine should be in tip top shape for 2009.

The ball machine is a great way to work on your game. You can alternate shots, practice against different types of spin and speed, and grove your shots. By randomly alternating shots, you can also get one heck of a good workout.

Checks for the Ball Machine Club are \$100 to Orindawoods and are due by March 1.

New Racquets

The Pro Shop has demos of Prince's three latest racquet releases, the EXO3 Silver, Red and Rebel. These are outstanding new racquets. The EXO3 Silver is great for the player who wants the racquet to create the power. The EXO3 Rebel is for the player who needs control and can create their own power. The EXO3 Red is positioned in-between these two. The EXO3 Silver and Red really reduce the vibration from the hit, and have huge sweet spots due to their exoskeleton string suspension. They are light and maneuverable. The EXO3 Rebel is heavier, and has more of a traditionally feel, with a tighter string pattern (not seen in Prince racquets before) for more control. This racquet has more vibration, which good players call feel.

Club Pros Keith and Patric have play tested these racquets, and Patric loves the EXO3 Rebel. Keith will also use the EXO3 Rebel this year, but felt the EXO3 Red just felt wonderful, so little vibration, and thinks many players will love this frame. Patric agrees.

If you want to order or test drive these frames, talk to Patric, who handles our Pro Shop sales. Keith and Philip can also help out, if Patric isn't available.

placed, or you could be so deceptive they can't tell where the ball is going.

Every player has a ball that they like to hit. It comes at a comfortable speed, and isn't too tricky. And when that ball comes to you, you look as good as Rafa (headband optional). It is like someone is feeding you batting practice. When the ball comes tougher, you play like Bozo. Every player, no matter how good, has a ball that breaks them down.

The second choice is that you can hit the ball worse than they want to hit it. Often worse is slower, shorter, deeper, more loop, or has more spin than they like. Giving them garbage, winning ugly, all these things fit in here. All your "favorite" lobbers and whimpy servers play this game to torture you and they enjoy it.

The third choice is you can play them the way they like to play, but just do it better than them. However, this is really back to option one above, because, relative to you, they suck. While it is fun to play someone else's game and do it better than them (crush their ego), this is by far the hardest way to go. These matches are often long, and the outcome is more uncertain.

To explain how all this works, I offer an example. I remember a match I played as a junior against someone that I practiced with quite often. In practice matches, where I was working on my game, we played good, competitive tennis. The points were fun, and while I usually won, the matches were close. However, during the practices, it became quite apparent to me that there was a style of play that my opponent didn't deal with very well. So, when we ended up playing each other in a club tournament that counted, I immediately went to this style that frustrated my opponent. I was up 4-1 in the first set when my opponent retired, refusing to play another point of that "crappy moon ball tennis." In one sense, I count this match as my greatest victory. It was a classic example of getting under someone's skin, mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. I beat him on all four fronts, in only five games.

On the other side, playing better than your opponent can handle, I remember watching matches when Steffi Graf was on top of the world, where she was so powerful and dominating that the match was over at 2-0 in the first set. The opponent would play the rest of the match, ten more games (6-0, 6-0), but you could see in their eyes the belief and competitiveness was gone at 2-0. Serena wasn't far from this in her match with Safina at the final of Australia this year.

Two Ways to Win

It has often been said that there are two ways to win. You can go out and win the match by inflicting pain on them. As mentioned above, this can take two forms, basically hit the ball better than them. Or you can go out there and hit the ball worse than they want to hit it. Either way, you are inflicting pain on the opponent, and causing them to make mistakes while you hit winners.

The second way is that you can let them lose. In other words, you just hit every ball in, often very safely (lobs, looping shots high over the net, low pace, high percentage). In this method you are asking them to make a lot of mistakes. Basically, you are saying, "I don't think you are good enough to beat me," or "you suck."

Smart players often flip flop between each of these as the quality of their opponent's play can fluctuate mid match.

Ramifications For League and Match Play

One of the real challenges of USTA league tennis, as opposed to open tennis (any one, of any level, can play) is that you are usually playing players of the same basic level. This makes the "you suck/I'm better than you" option very hard to play. When I played high school tennis, for example. I knew I was a better player, and in better shape, that almost anyone I played. So I could just hit the ball in and there was no way someone else was going to get more balls in. It wasn't going to happen.

But in USTA league tennis where everyone is rated the same, if you do choose this option, then the matches are going to probably be very long, because if you are both 3.5s, your strengths and weaknesses should balance out. You could easily play three hours, finish the match barely able to walk, and quite possibly lose.

In league play, I would try to take the opponent out of their comfort zone by hitting the either "better" or "worse" than they want to hit it. Often shot selection comes down to picking the shots where you can hit it harder than they want, and then recognizing other situations where you need to hit it easier than they want to keep them off balance.

Speaking very simply here without getting you out on a court to show you, it goes like this. Balls that you have to hit up limit you in how hard you can hit them (or they will go long). If you have to hit the ball up, it is wise to try to hit the ball in a way that is "worse" than your opponent wants to hit it (lob, loop, lots of spin, place the ball in tough spots). If

the ball is higher than the height of the net, then it makes sense to hit the ball "better" than your opponent wants it (harder, sooner, quicker). This is where the game has really changed. Today's players attacking strategy is built entirely around getting more of these balls that are contacted above the height of the net (see the January 09 newsletter, Upgrading the Midcourt Game). The idea is to take the ball at the height of the bounce, and drive it forward with a lot of pace (today's forehands,

Quote of the Month:

"Nadal loves to compete more than he loves to win. That is why, when the pressure time comes, he plays so well."

backhands and swinging volleys are horizontal strokes, not the low-to-high strokes of yesterday when we let the ball drop to hit it). Serena is the master of this style, punishing second serves by standing in and catching them high.

In conclusion, the goal is to make it difficult for your opponent to play well against you. This increases the odds of you winning. Please keep in mind, that if your opponent played really well and crushed you, you deserve at least some of the "credit" for making them look good. And on the other side of the coin, remember that after you win if your opponent complains about your game, or says they weren't playing very well today, that is about the highest compliment you are going to get, you just have to be able to hear it that way. This is the reason behind why top sports psychologist Jim Loehr says, "If you play and everything goes your way, you aren't good, you're lucky." Dealing with adversity, and creating adversity for your opponent, is the real skill. Good luck out there!

Happiness, Burn Out and Recovery

It is easy to get frustrated with all the recent rain, and having matches, lessons and practices get postponed, but winter is a very important time of the year (and not just for the flowers and reservoirs). This is the time of the year for recovery.

We had a very long tennis season last year, as it stopped raining last winter on March 1, for all intents and purposes. The rain really didn't start up until mid-December, and has been infrequent until recently. I can tell you, as someone who plays an awful lot of tennis, this has been really rough. But this long season is rough for the people that only play three times a week too. We all have an optimum amount of tennis we can play, and to push beyond that, asks for trouble.

Often players come out to a lesson, and they start off by saying, "Gee Keith, I haven't been able to play for a couple weeks now. I'm going to be terrible. Go easy on me."

The funning thing is, that this is seldom true. If they are more than total beginners, they often play quite well, and often better than they do in the middle of the season when they have been playing a lot. As I have mentioned here in this space many times, their attention is high, and their expectations are low, a formula for success if there ever was one. But it is more than this, their mind and body is sharp, well-rested, and their emotions are generally eager to be out there and give it a lot of effort. Sure, they are concerned their lack of practice will hurt them, but they are generally happy to be back on the court.

Happy, let's not let that word slip by. I think happy, or joy, is the biggest determiner of success. High positive energy. Of course tennis is a game of skill, and without skills, you can't play very well. But to maximize what you do have, nothing works like happy. If you have a big match coming up, I would do everything I could to get in a joyful frame of mind before you even walk on the court, and do everything you can once you are there to stay there and protect that joyful outlook. Worrying about your technique (or any thing else, like your partner) at this point only hurts you. You have what you have, enjoy it.

Of course we are not always happy on the court, but if you start to have a pattern of repeatedly not being happy out there, I think it is time to take a break, or change your attitude (play in a way that is fun for you irregardless of results, take some lessons, something). When you start thinking, or wishing, you were some where else, that is the big RED FLAG that you might be playing too much.

If you continue to play, pushing yourself to continue to practice, or honor your commitment to your Saturday game, or your team, over and over again, eventually, you will find burn out. You feel listless, you hit the gas and nothing really happens. When you do play well, it doesn't last very long. Your batteries never seem to fully recharge.

Once you get to burnout, it can take a long time to recover. We are not talking about a good night's sleep here. Your soul is damaged, and you need time to heal. Months or years.

I played a great deal of tennis (3-5 hours a day) between the ages of 10 and 19. Because I started a bit later than most really strong players, I felt that I had to practice extra hard and extra long to catch up. And I did nearly catch up by the time I was 18, but I was so exhausted from the effort, that I didn't realize I was even there. And, more importantly, I had no energy to go on. After a year of college tennis, I was done. I stood right on the edge of achieving what I had fought so hard for, and I couldn't take another step. At that point, I don't think I ever wanted to play again, and didn't play much at all for the next four years of school. There was one point where I attempted a brief comeback, but quickly felt exhausted and unmotivated again. After graduate school, I wasn't doing anything, so I took a tennis teaching job, and found that helping others gave tennis back to me. I found a way for it to be fun again. But it was still many years after that, that I started playing matches again. And to this day, I do it judiciously.

Look at all the top players that have stopped cold when they were supposedly at their peak. Justine Henin is just the latest. Borg, Willander, McEnroe, Austin, Hingis... some tried comebacks, others never came back.

Burn out is bad news, so enjoy the recovery that the winter gives us. And be sure to build some recovery into the long tennis season too once the rain stops and you can play every day. Monitor the fun you are having, where are you on the happy scale, and let that be your guide. It doesn't matter how much your competitors or friends are practicing or playing, what matters is your level of joy.



Orindawoods Tennis Club

650 Orindawoods Dr
Orinda, CA 94563
USA

Phone:

925-254-1065

Fax:

925-254-1380

Website:

www.orindawoodstennis.com

Executive Tennis

Director:

Keith Wheeler
orindawoodstc@sbccglobal.net

Head Pro:

Patric Hermanson
PatricTennis@yahoo.com

Associate Pro:

Philip Laubscher

Junior Tennis Staff:

Emily Spitz
Victoria

Weekend Staff:

Cortney Krakow

Newsletter Editor:

Keith Wheeler

Associate Editor:

Patric Hermanson

Of course joy can be somewhat disguised in competitive sports. Since we are not all laughing our heads off while we play "serious" tennis (we could talk a lot about that too – is serious really helping us?), a great indicator of our level of "tennis happiness" is how well we are moving our feet, and how committed we are to doing it. Players that are having fun, and enjoying their tennis move around. You don't have to be Jelena Jankovic out there, but are you near the top or bottom of your movement potential?

When I see my students standing around out there, or really having to struggle to move, I start to think of ways I can make it fun again. I watch league matches, and so many people just stand there, and I wonder how much fun that is. At best, the pressure is getting to them. At worse, they don't want to be there. Start dancing, if you don't feel like dancing, take a break.

We have all invested a great deal of time and energy into our tennis. It is better to take a week off now and then, than to get to the point where only months or years of rest are going to help. So many people have quit tennis over the years, and many of the best players quit from playing too much, not because it is too difficult, or because they are too busy. Did you know that most of the top juniors from the past don't play tennis any more. This is tragic, and completely unnecessary if they had listened to what their energy level was telling them, rather than to their goals and compulsions.

Of course this is true of much more than just playing tennis. We look at so many people that get burned out in the work place or school. Often when the pressure is really on, we stop taking the time to do the things that are going to survive in the long run, like have fun, take breaks or get some exercise. I know I have taught a lot of lessons, especially in the past couple of dry, drought years, and I need to make sure to schedule breaks, take time off, and go to conferences where I get new ideas and invigorate my fun and love of teaching.

Good luck out there, and this winter, enjoy splashing in the puddles!

Quote of the Month II

"Tennis is hard enough if you move. If you don't want to move, take up golf." – Rick Macci, top coach who coached Roddick, Capriati, Venus and Serena as kids.

Orindawoods Junior Spring Clinic Schedule 2009

The 2009 Spring Junior Clinics begin the week of **March 16th**, and will finish up the week of **June 5th**. The 11 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	\$125/\$140 (member/non OW)	\$205/\$220
Future Stars (7-10 yrs)	Tuesday 4-5:30 pm	\$245/\$270 (member/non OW)	n/a
Tennis Development Group (11-14 yrs)	Thursday 4-5:30	\$245/\$270 (member/non OW)	n/a
Tournament Training (by invitation only)	Wednesdays 4:30-6 pm	\$245/\$270 (member/non OW)	n/a

New: This Spring we are adding an additional play day on Fridays for players in the Thursday Tennis Development Group or the Wednesday, Tournament Training Group.

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!

**New OW Hats: \$10
Get yours today!**