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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

A Touchy Subject

Tennis Court Reservations

Tongue in Cheek: This is our new reservation policy: As of today, _____ (fill in your name) will get any court they want, at any time. That's right, you can say to your friends and non-friend-court rivals, "After me, you come first."

In fact, for a nominal fee of _____ (six figures -- I fill in the blank), I will have a sign made saying:

"M. _____'s (fill in your name) Court, Keep off!"

We've made this change in policy because it more clearly reflects the mood and beliefs of many of the people making reservations. We thought it was only appropriate to get in step with the times.

We are also taking down the sign at the front of the club that says, "No firearms allowed on the property." (Actual sign at a club in Texas—probably at more than one club in Texas). It is survival of the fittest from now on, and you should know, that the staff is packing heavy artillery. "Go ahead, make my day."

Or as Thomas Hobbs would say, the world is a jungle, everyone out for themselves. "[Lives are] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."

Alright, forgive me, I dabble in hyperbole a bit here. The above doesn't really sound like the club I want to belong to.

I encourage all of us, me included, to take a deep breath here and remember we are all members of a club (a group of people brought together by common interests). And a wonderful club it is. We all love tennis, and want to play.

Let's look at this reservation problem a bit more sanely.

The Pain: Of course it hurts when we don't get the reservation we want, whether it is the first time, or the tenth time. You want to play. Perhaps you feel like you are letting your partners down.

An Observation: Sometimes when we want to play at a time that happens to be the same time some of our friends and fellow members want to play. Most days, there are enough courts, but sometimes there are not. It is a tough predicament.

Feelings: Not being able to get a court to play when we want can make us sad or frustrated or raging mad.

Needs: We want to play. We have a need to exercise, recreate, for friendship and competition. Tennis can be our practice, our art, and our meditation. It can be what brings sanity, or perhaps needed insanity, into our lives. Maybe it calms us down, perhaps it charges us up, makes us feel alive. Tennis may connect us to the divine, or center us in our soul. Maybe we just need to get out of the house. In other words, tennis is flippin' important! Thank you very much.

Resolving Conflicts: How do we best resolve these potential conflicts? Well first of all, I think it is important to realize that we

Many Thanks to Philip

Our Associate Pro, Philip Laubscher left us to return to his home state of Washington to live with his new bride Liz. Philip's last day was July 29. We will miss Philip. He has been part of the team for five years now. Philip has taught many of you great private lessons, and has allowed us to have a great junior program, with two top pros on the court with our juniors at all times. Thank you Philip, we will miss you!

Ladies League Tennis

Summer Leagues are winding down and everyone got to play a lot of league tennis on our 3.0, 3.5A, 3.5B and 4.0 teams. Our 4.0 team made the playoffs by winning on the last day of the season (the first round playoff was played after publication on 7/18)

This fall we will be entered in several ladies leagues. League matches are played on courts 4, 5 & 6 (no walk-on courts during league matches).

USTA Senior League Tennis. Senior is over fifty around here, and we have both a 3.0 and two 3.5 teams to compete this fall. These matches are mostly played on the weekends starting at 11 a.m. (or later).

BALL and Fall Leagues start up with the beginning of school. We have entered teams in BALL B3, Fall A2, and BALL A3, plus BALL Senior C. These matches are played on Monday and Friday mornings (not every week) starting at 9:30 a.m..

Fall Junior Program

The fall junior program begins the week of August 31 with the same great line-up we had last Fall. Little Ones is offered twice a week for our 4-6 year olds, with Future Stars (ages 7-9) on Tuesdays from 4-5:30, Tennis Development (10+) on Thursdays 4-5:30 and Tournament Training (invite only) Wednesdays 4:30-6. With Orindawoods Friday Team Tennis on Friday afternoons. The program runs for 15 weeks in the fall.

Little Ones costs \$145 (once a week) or \$225 (twice a week). Future Stars, Tennis Development Group and the Tournament Training Group all cost \$295 for the 15 week session. Friday Team Tennis price is still to be determined.

Women's High School Tennis

We have several teenagers who grew up in our program playing tennis for Miramonte High School this fall: Anya, Tamar, Anne, Dani, and Tara. In addition, Valerie, a new member, plays for Accalanes High School. Good luck!

all have some, if not all, of these beautiful needs. The needs themselves are not in conflict.

Strategies: So in order to meet these beautiful needs, we choose to play tennis, and to play at a specific time, with specific people. Sometimes on a specific court (our beloved court # ____). These are strategies. So strategies that different members employ may come into conflict just like in a match. Some strategies don't work all the time.

In order to meet as many people's needs as possible, the Club also comes up with strategies, or systems to allow people to make as many reservations as they need in as fair and equal of way, taking into consideration as many of the beautiful needs of as many of the members as possible.

Several years ago now we went to a computer based system to manage our court reservations. We did this for several reasons, but mainly for the convenience of the membership. Since that time, people can make a reservation one week and one hour before they want to play. That starting time seems to make sense. Tennis is on their mind, they are often getting ready for their game this week, and they can make a reservation quick and simple on the computer for next week. The hour lead-time allows time to travel to the Club after booking next week's reservation.

We realize that no system is perfect. A few members don't use computers, and some people find the starting time inconvenient (they might still be at work, or still in bed, in a meeting or somewhere in between on the great highways of America). Any time we picked would be inconvenient for someone, perhaps just not you.

The vast majority of the time this computer system works great and has been a great improvement over our old system of calling in on Monday morning and listening to a busy signal for up to twenty minutes while our beleaguered staff took call after call from anxious, tense members hoping to play on their favorite court at their favorite time.

How To Make Court Reservations: Our current system, for those of you who don't know, allows you to make a reservation 169 hours in advance (one week and one hour). In order to make a reservation, you need to register on the website. A full list of instructions and reservation rules are listed there: www.orindawoodstennis.com.

Some members are very skilled at signing on and clicking "confirm" right at the first moment a court becomes available (often within a second or two the reservation becomes eligible), but these instances when competition for courts is this intense is limited to a few times per week. (Wednesday morning, Thursday evening and Saturday a.m.). The website clock seems to be set to Greenwich Mean Time (Zulu) minus 8 hours. Best of luck.

We normally have a couple of court at the club that are just drop-in (courts 4 & 5). We believe that you shouldn't have to plan a week in advance to play tennis. If we have league matches, there are no drop-in courts, but matches don't usually occur on busy days at prime time. Sometimes we use one these courts for lessons (junior program in the afternoon when court demand is low). Remember though, if you are going to take advantage of the drop-in courts, it is a good idea to plan to be here a bit early and make sure nothing special is going on at the club (see Club Calendar).

Complaints: The primary complaint that we get is, "Some people are better than me at making a reservation, and they get the court I want week after week." Of course I also hear that "So-and-so must be getting on early and has an unfair advantage". I am happy to check out these instances (the reservations have a time stamp and I can check it), but I can tell you that each time, the reservation has been made properly, within the rules (these people are just very fast).

I hear that "I am a member and I can't get on the courts." Being a member gives you the opportunity to play, and to make a reservation, but doesn't guarantee that you can have a court when you want it. That kind of court would be a private court that you own. This is a shared-use facility, where we are sharing the costs to have a nice place to play, and some nice people to play with (who sometimes ace us out of the court we want).

Next I will hear that "so-and-so shouldn't be allowed to get the court each week. That isn't fair. They have had it twenty weeks in a row."

Let's see, if I played Roger Federer he should throw me a bone and let me win every once in a while because it isn't fair that he beats me all the time (because he has more skill, or had better lessons growing up, or a better god-given body, or he is more composed under pressure – or whatever his advantage over me is – probably all of the above).

Half the people that played tennis today lost. I can tell you that some people win more than others. The problems develop if the person losing (one match in a hundred or every match) starts to call themselves losers. In actual fact, everyone out there trying is a winner. Whether it is playing a match or getting a court. Stay out there, keep battling.

If the playing field wasn't level, then there might be some argument here to the same person getting the court each week. But everyone has the same opportunity to reserve courts. I realize the time might not be convenient for some,

but if there are three other players in your group, perhaps one of the other Club members in the group could make the reservation.

We have people who have played at a certain time, on a certain court for the last twenty years. Then someone comes along and starts competing with them for that court. They scream, "It isn't fair, we have been playing for years." Entitlement is not

Quote of the Month:

"We all want systems so perfect that no one will have to be good."
-- Thomas Wolfe

fair either, and everyone under the current system has an equal opportunity to each court, at each time. It's great that you are able to play with your friends every week, but you have to compete like everyone else.

Definition of Fair: Forgive me, but I have to take a shot at fair. I understand that it is human nature to want a system where I get what I want. That is how people, if they admit it, often define fair. "Give everyone a chance, but give me what I want. That's fair." I can tell you, people barely stop short of saying this.

On the other side of human nature, "We all want systems so perfect that on one will need to be good." – Thomas Wolfe. That is, good as in morally correct. Is there a moral question here? Should we share? At this point, the opportunity to reserve courts is shared.

If we were going to share further, one of the real problems is, whom are we sharing with (that is, do we know everyone who might want that court on a given day?). Do we have a lottery each week for the hot times? What defines a hot time? (Again, some would define it as, "I didn't get a court. Find some way that I do"). Invite everyone who might want to participate? Who runs this? Is it better than the system we have?

Some suggest trading off with your reservation rivals? Do we know who all the potential rivals are? What if someone else comes along and wants that time? You might both get aced. Do you have more rights than an unknown third party? That starts to sound like entitlement again.

With any system that has been man-made, there are flaws. The system we have in place works over 95% of the time, based on the feedback I receive. That means 5% of the people are unhappy. Of course this makes me sad. I don't want people to be unhappy, but as the Buddha said, "life is suffering." Or perhaps, we have to admit there will be some suffering in life. How we carry this suffering and pain often defines us. Look at Federer in Australia this year in tears, then that changed to joy at Wimbledon and Paris. We don't know for certain that not getting what we want isn't in our best long-term interest. Maybe it is what leads us to something even greater.

Is there a better system? I'm open to suggestions, but it has to fit in for as many people as possible, and it has to fit within the limited resources and funding we have here to administer it.

Lighted courts in the evening are an even more limited resource. That is why we have several reservation guidelines specifically pointed at those circumstances. No team practices on lighted courts. Half the players must be members. Other guidelines, as well as all the court rules, are listed on the club's website under court rules.

The Favorites: I understand that the current system does favor people with an attention to detail that are dedicated to stopping whatever they are doing and making a reservation one week and one hour in advance. That is, people that want it more. This may not be your style, but perhaps one of the people you play with has these traits and can take over the reservation duties.

If you don't get the reservation you want, I do understand that it is frustrating. I'm happy to give lessons on how to get a reservation quicker, but as everyone improves their reservation skills, that doesn't change anything. It just means that somebody still gets aced out, just might be a different person. You may think, "If it is her and not me, then great," but the problem still remains. We have a limited resource that can't meet all the needs a few times during the week and someone is going to be unhappy. We are sorry, but as the Rolling Stones penned so long ago, "You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you just might find, you get what you need."

There are other courts and other times to play, plus you can play on the drop-in courts too. Good luck out there!

Tennis Tip

Getting a Grip

There are lots of grips in tennis, Tourna Grip, Gamma Grip, raised grips, sticky grips, over grips, cushioned grips, as well as the Continental Grip, the Eastern Grip, the Western Grip, the semi Western grip, the Hybrid grip, and many variations of each of these. Since the grip of the racquet is your only contact with the instrument you need to use to hit the ball, and thus your only connection to the ball in play, the way you hold the racquet is a pretty important part of the game. While the texture of the grip is important, and the angle at which you place the racquet in your hand is also important, this article is going to discuss the actual holding of the grip by your hand. Your grip on the grip, so to speak.

Do we hold it tightly, loosely, firmly or floppy? Do we use our wrist to maneuver the racquet into place, our arm, our shoulder, turning our hips? So many questions.

In order to know how to hold the racquet we need to know what the different functions of the body and particularly the hand are in the stroke.

When your opponent hits the ball your brain recognizes where the shot is going (forehand, backhand, overhead) and how far you will have to move. Your feet and legs start to move, your body starts to coil (turn and bend). Then your arm winds, and hand folds. At this first half of the stroke it is important that the whole body is loose, quick, mobile. Coordination and speed are of the essence. You have to find the ball, and you want to create speed in your swing to create power in your stroke (if that is what is called for). We are most coordinated when we are loose and flexible. These are also the qualities we are looking for to create speed, and therefore power. Most people think that



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strength is the most important part of power, but it is actually flexibility (range of motion), which has the strongest correlation to speed (Andy Roddick, for example, is an extremely flexible man, especially in the shoulder, arm, wrist and back, which are used on the serve).

On the groundstrokes, for example, since the legs and trunk are the slower parts of the body, they have to start moving first. The arm and the hand are much faster parts of the body, and don't start moving until much later (worst teaching advice ever: get your racquet back early – causes you to be stiff when you need the most to be loose). The quickest part of the physical body is the hands (the fastest part of the entire body is of course the brain). The arms would be next. If power is based on speed, then this is where the speed and power are going to come from. Twisting and turning of the hand and arm create torque, the primary force we are going to use in creating power. The core of the body is slower, and stronger, excellent for stability and control, but more on that later. The legs may carry us around the court, but compared to the speed that the hand and arm can produce, they are quite slow, even if you have quick feet.

How does all this tie into the grip? Well, let's look at the hand. It is an amazing part of our anatomy, and one of the reasons that man surpassed most of the other animals. Of course there is an opposable thumb, and a quite coordinated index finger, and middle finger. The bottom two fingers (plus the middle finger—which is kind of dual purpose) are the gripping fingers. You can do a pull up holding on to the bar with just bottom two or three fingers. You could never do this with the top two fingers. While on the other side of things, we pick up most things with the top two fingers and the thumb, whether it is a pencil, chop sticks or the ball you are about to toss for the serve.

If the first part of the stroke is ideally very loose, where there is a lot of winding and coiling to create force, then we want to hold onto the racquet grip with just our top two fingers, maybe only our thumb and index finger. This way we can move much faster than the slower, gripping fingers could move us. This helps us with our coordination, and with our speed.

As the racquet is about to meet the ball, the requirements change rapidly. Coordination has already done its part, and we have lots of racquet hand speed. Now what we need to do in the collision with the ball is transfer this energy to the ball, and aim the shot towards the court (and the target). In order to do this, we must suddenly become very steady. If we engage the bottom three fingers at this time and grip the racquet, the racquet snaps into place and holds its position towards the target. If we contact the ball right at this snap of the hand, the ball will go very fast, and towards the target. In the moments right at contact and right after, the body (strength, leverage) comes into play. The body is stable, on balance, and we are able to hold the racquet face, using our bottom three fingers, towards the target. Accuracy is achieved with no cost to power. In fact, hitting the ball with this gripping (snap) is what the pros feel when they hit the ball, and few club players do. But you can.

If we look at the pros we can notice a couple of important things that they do much better than the rest of us. They hold the racquet face towards the target much longer than most club players after the hit. The follow through, in other words, is relatively slow, target oriented and very controlled. Before the hit, almost the opposite is found to be true. They are much farther out of alignment with the target on the backswing than most of us, so that they can create more force. They wind and coil the arm and the hand, and then come back to square with the ball and the court. This intentional lack of alignment and the transition to alignment are planned to come together at the contact point. It is a fixed, planned point in space, out to the side of the player, and the line of the stroke goes right to (not through) that predetermined point.

So on the ground strokes the grip on the racquet transitions from being very loose and primarily in the top of the hand (thumb, first one or two fingers) to a steady, stable grip where the bottom three fingers squeeze and come into play just prior to contact. These bottom three fingers were completely absent at the beginning of the stroke. Well after contact, at the end of the stroke, the bottom three fingers become loose again and the player's arm relaxes back into the ready position. The volleys tend to be steady (more lower finger gripping, less looseness) most of the time, while the serve (and to a lesser degree, the overhead) are much looser (little lower finger pressure) all the way through

Try this rhythmic gripping pattern next time you are out to hit a ball. Good luck!