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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

Squeegee Rules or Squeegees Rule! (Or Roll)

We have two types of water removal devices here at the club: the blades and the squeegees (or rollers). Let's talk Roller Science.

Roller Science: First thing you should know, is that squeegees only work when they are wet (think sponge, which basically they are). So you say, "No problem, it's been raining, they're wet." Well, sorry, they are not. The incredible squeegee holders that we have (very attractive, very good for keeping the squeegees out of the sun – which ruins them in the summer) also keeps the squeegees dry. So you have to get the squeegee wet before you use it. Soaking the squeegee in a big puddle can work, or we have resorted at times to using the pool. Spanish Bay uses a horse trough. Golfers, my my, what are you going to do?

Roller Fact #2: Squeegees get ruined if you leave them sitting on the ground. Here you are, you've finally gotten your squeegee wet, so it works, and then you have rolled your court and leave the squeegee on the side and play. The problem is, when a wet squeegee dries, it reforms as flat on one side (the side sitting on the ground), and no matter how wet you get it in the future, it always retains some of it's square side, thus bumping along the ground, rather than rolling. In this flat condition, it doesn't pick up water very well any more. Very frustrating. The short request here is: Please hang up the squeegees when you are done.

Circle Dry: The best way to dry a damp court with a squeegee (truthfully you're just assisting in the drying process, which after all is mostly done by evaporation caused by the sun and wind), is to push the squeegee in a circle, spiraling out from the center towards the outer edges of the court, the circle getting slightly bigger with each pass. This not only sponges up some of the water, but also pushes the excess surface water towards the outsides of the court.

Blade Facts: The blades are for pushing water off the court. Unlike the sponge-like squeegees, they don't actually pick up any water, they just help to move it. They actually work better if you don't push too hard (in a downward direction). The rubber blade just touching the court lightly and not catching or dragging on the ground moves the water quite well. The blades do not have to be hung up on the fence like the rollers, but please put them to the side when you are done, preferably on the fence by where the net post is closest to the edge. This is the most out of the way of any potential tennis action.

Congratulations!

Davies' Stadium Team Finishes 3rd at Nationals

The 40 plus 4.0 Women's team from Davies' Stadium in Oakland won their league, won districts, won sectionals and went to finish 3rd at the USTA Nationals last month in Palm Springs. In fact, the team was three match points away from gaining the final. Amazing. This team included many members from Orindawoods, including captain Stephanie Yee. Also

Reindeer Games

Now that we have rain in the forecast we are picking the one day of the year when we are sure it will rain: the date of the annual Reindeer Games (pronounced "rain-oh-dear" games). So sign up, and make alternate plans to do something just in case.

This year's Reindeer Games will be held on Sunday, December 7th at 2 p.m.. Don't miss out. The cost is free (even we don't have the nerve to charge for something that never happens). Please contact Keith or Lysbeth if you would like to plan what you won't be doing on Dec. 7.

Lobby Remodel

The Orindawoods Board has approved the remodeling of the Tennis Club Lobby area. We have detailed plans and have a contractor in place. The exact date when this work will be done is still to be determined. Dealing with remodeling and the City can be a slow process. Wish us luck.

It will be nice to have better kitchen facilities and a larger common space for us to congregate, host parties and socialize in the years to come. Stay tuned for more details.

A club is a place where like-minded people come together to share their common interests and have a great time. We have always had a wonderful courts, an amazing deck area and now we will have a place to hang out when the weather conditions require a bit of cover either due to sun, wind, cold or rain. The legend of Orindawoods continues, and grows.

on the team were Orindawoods members Darlet Lin, Marcy Sharafian, Ellie Kann, Laura Kim, Kay Sander, Andrea O'Brien and Pascale Siu (co-captain). The team often practiced here at Orindawoods. Other members of the team were from Moraga Country Club, Orinda Country Club and a few other local players. In gratitude and recognition for the special relationship this team had with Orindawoods, the team presented the Club with a 3rd place banner. Many of the players expressed what an amazing experience it was playing at Nationals and being a part of this team. Congratulations! So exciting.

Apples and Oranges Playing in the Same League (USTA Fruit Basket or Nut Case?)

The USTA is a strange critter, made up of many different types of organizations and players from many different walks of life. Each player and organization has different goals and methods for enjoying their tennis. I believe most players would love to have the experience described above of going to Nationals. We honor and support our members in that success. I'm thrilled for them. They worked hard, and deserve every accolade accorded them.

And yet this team played out of Davies and not out of Orindawoods (or MCC or OCC for that matter). The obvious question is why? This team was hand picked to win. And played to win. I'm sure virtually every team at Nationals had a similar focus. Get the best players you can, play the strongest line up possible in each match. No prisoners. That's winning. And this team knew what it was about from the beginning and made no apologies. And none should be made. A through and through success manage to near perfection by the captains and supported by the team. This team consisted of players who wanted to see how well they could do. That is what we are suppose to be doing, right? Challenge ourselves to be the best. That is the kind of team I have participated in many times, from little league through high school, college and beyond into adult sports.

Club Teams. A club team is a bit different, and has different goals. And these goals are just as valid, but success has to be redefined. Sure, everyone wants to win, but there is a bit more to it. The club team is for the members. If a club team doesn't serve the members, why does it exist? So basically, if you are the appropriate level, you should have a place on the team, and you should get to play at least some of the matches, a relatively even number with other players (depending on your availability, of course). A club is a group of like-minded people who have come together for a shared interest or purpose. It is inclusive by nature, and important that everyone feels like they belong. A club team that doesn't serve the members is a loser, no matter how many matches they win. So it is a bit tougher for the all-inclusive club team, to compete with the handpicked, best-line-up teams.

Non-member Team Members. Sometimes club teams need non-members on the team so that there are enough players to have a team. Saying that no non-members are allowed is kind of foolish if it means that your members won't get to play b/c there are not enough for a team. We do limit our non-member players to people that belong to another club, and thus are people that are supporting the club industry.

Playing Up. Of course you can fill your team with club members from the next level down. The tricky part is that the better players want to have a team and teammates that fit in with their level and ambitions. For example, if you have 5.5 team (I'm using a ridiculously high rating for this example so I don't inadvertently hurt someone's feelings) that is mostly made up of 5.0 players, that really isn't very fun for the 5.5s you do have, who have to partner with weaker players and get beaten (damaging their hard-earned NTRP rating). So we bring in some non-member 5.5s to play with our 5.5s. That way the member 5.5s get to enjoy league tennis at their relative level. Some top 5.0s may play up to fill out the team, but if the vast majority of the team is populated with 5.0s, the 5.5 members are not having their needs met. If you are a 5.0, and want the challenge of playing up, and like having good partners (5.5s), you could probably could care less about the concerns of the 5.5s. If you are a 5.5, you care a great deal. Hopefully, in this scenario, there would also be a 5.0 team for the 5.0s to play on. The trick involves those players that are very much between levels, in this case, almost to 5.5 but still 5.0. If they play 5.0, with weaker 5.0s, that hurts their chances of being bumped up (dream of a lifetime). If they play up at 5.5 and lose, it doesn't really hurt them, but could hurt their 5.5 partner. Complicated. Subjective. Difficult. Discretion required. We do our best. Apologies in advance.

Quote of the Month

"I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear." – Rosa Parks



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court updates, lesson
programs and much
more!

So you can see that in USTA leagues, where we are all playing, the teams can have very different make-ups and objectives. Some are apples, some are oranges. This is why most top teams at Nationals come from parks, where the restrictions of pleasing the entire membership are not in play. You pick your own membership, so to speak.

With the play-to-win apples, there can be some hard feelings from players (rotten apples?) who weren't picked, or players who didn't get to play because they were not deemed to be the strongest (not quite as shiny apples). With the everyone-plays oranges there is the feeling that something is being held back (not quite ripe), and that we are not competitive in the league that features ringers. Neither method is better than the other, it is just best to be sure what style you are playing. After all, when you take a piece of fruit out of the basket, it is helpful to know if it is an apple or an orange, and which you prefer. Especially if you are a tennis nut, like most of us.

Tennis Tip:

A Problem of Opposite Solutions (Bounce and Spin at Contact)

When a ball and racquet meet, the ball bounces off the strings and spins. The challenge in playing tennis is managing the bounce versus the spin aspect of contact. Is the contact predominantly a bounce, or spin? The solutions for controlling the ball with one type of contact are the opposite for doing it with the other. This inherent conflict in the problem solving can destroy a player, their confidence and their ability to hit effectively. Let me explain.

Bounce: If the primary interaction of contact is the ball bouncing off the strings, then to keep it from sailing too far, you would slow down. In other words, make the ball have less of a bounce off the strings. You might also control the distance by either aiming the flight of the ball lower (just over the net if you are hitting it relatively hard), or hitting it very high (lob), so that no matter how solid you hit it, it will fall back down into the court rather than sail too long. Gravity happens.

Spin: If the primary interaction of contact is spin, then to control the ball you would do something very different. The faster your stroke, the more spin. If you are using topspin, the faster your stroke, the more the ball would drop. So to get more control with topspin, you would swing faster and aim higher (because the ball is going to drop more). If your stroke was too slow and you were spinning the ball, the ball would just drop into the net.

The solutions of these two types of contact are exact opposite for achieving control of height and distance you desire when you drive a ball:

Bounce Contact: aim lower, hit slower = less distance

Spin Contact: aim higher, stroke (brush) faster = less distance

You can see that if you can't control which type of contact you are generating, it is pretty hard to figure out what to do to correct your errors.

Contact Memory: What if I'm a good player, and I play by spinning the ball, why does this discussion have anything to do with me?

If you starting playing tennis, which virtually all of us have done, with a bounce-style contract, and we now have a spin-dominated contact, deep down inside, when we get scared (big match, big point, big rivalry), our tendency is to go back to aim lower, swing slower, because that was our first experience with tennis safety. Unfortunately that would be completely wrong if we are now a more advanced, spin-based player.

The Dividing Line: The truth is, confident, successful, skilled players swing faster in pressure situations where they have to get the ball in. They use more spin, thus have more control. They want to increase those attributes when they don't feel like they should miss. More spin on a second serve, for example, than a first serve. The player with the greatest control on the pro tour, Rafael Nadal, is a big hitter. Quicker strokes, more spin, faster speeds all go together. They are not opposites.

That's why the game is faster today. Now if you don't trust your spin game (a confidence crisis), you'll find yourself wanting to fall back on the slow-it-down answer, which would be a disaster. It is a disaster because the answers are opposites. If you go to spin a ball, but go slower and aim lower, the ball is going to go in the net. If your spin ball is going into the net, the answer might be to aim higher, but if you forget or lose the spin and contact with more bounce, a higher aimed shot is going to fly long.

The trouble is that players in crisis tend to start grabbing answers from anywhere. Our focus becomes very short-term: I have to make this shot or the world will end. This tennis physics problem has multiple variables, and opposite solutions. We have to keep our heads and be selective in our problem solving.

Safer? Within no time, you can go from having a very good forehand, to a total loss of confidence and a train wreck forehand. This can happen to very good players from time to time. Human nature takes hold. Almost any one facing this type of disaster, will try to play safer. But what is safer? It is better to stick with what you got, and work with those specific variables. So for example, you are spinning the ball, stick to going faster (to bring the ball down) or aiming higher (to get it out of the net).

No one using the bounce method is very good at all (better than 3.5-4.0). So there is a real dividing line, or glass ceiling in tennis. Those players who have learned the skills of spinning have the potential to rise to high heights, and those who hit the ball flat are severely limited by what gravity, and gravity alone, can do for them.

This is where the specter of fear looms large, and why choking becomes so damaging. If you are playing against a spin-based player, and you slow down (become a pusher – a bounce-based player) you are going to be in trouble even if you don't make errors. A spin-based player can hit the ball harder, and higher over the net and be safe. Their spin method is safer than your pushing. Going back to the old definition of safe (playing it safe using the bounce method and pushing the ball), isn't safe at all.

Why Players Stay Stuck: The trouble is, almost everyone who begins playing tennis starts out with the bounce method (unless they were lucky enough to have modern instruction right from the beginning). So as you get better, and move from the bounce method towards the spin method, there is the awkward and frustrating stage where you are caught in between and aren't sure what to do. The best way to get through this is commit to spin, and just deal with the learning misses. Each time you spin the balls but end up missing you are getting valuable information. If you bounce (ha ha) back and forth between flat strokes (beginning, bounce-base hitting) and spin shots, you will get so confused and prolong the time you stay in that limbo. Accept limbo, commit to the future, and just plow through it.

This in a nutshell, is why it is so difficult to improve. No one wants to be in that clueless stage, so they just stay comfortable and bad. In fact, people only make changes when staying the same (lousy) becomes more uncomfortable than the pain of going through learning. This is true for alcoholics, tennis players and anyone in between. Good luck out there!

Orindawoods Fall Junior Tennis Success

The Fall Clinics were teaming with juniors of all ages and abilities. Well done Patric and Anna Marie!

Fall League: we had two teams in this year's Contra Costa Fall League. One was 10 and under, and the other was 13 and over. For our 10 and unders, this was for many their first competitive tennis experience playing kids outside of the neighborhood. They did so well, and represented themselves with skill, enthusiasm and good sportsmanship. There is nothing like competition to push the learning curve, and our 10 and under players did great in their first experiences. Our veteran team of 13 and over group also had a good season. Many of these players are getting ready for the challenges of tournament and high school tennis. They look well prepared. Go Orindawoods!

Orindawoods Junior Championships: The Orindawoods Junior Championships were held the last weekend in October. Several club members did well, including tournament winners Nico Haet (Boys 14s) and Katie Reeves (Girls 14s). Also participating were Sydney Bell, Luca Gamboa, Stephen Tse, Nathan Sharafian, Peter Wong and Anna Hyman. Congrats to all!

Winter Junior Clinics: The winter clinics will begin the second week of January. Call or write Patric at the club to enroll today.