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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](http://www.orindawoodstennis.com)  
"I like this place, and willingly could waste my time in it" – Celia, *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene IV

## **Happy Holidays**

All of us at Orindawoods Tennis Club want to wish you all a very happy holiday. Stay warm, be safe, hug someone you love.

## **Pro Shop Holiday Hours**

We are enjoying our new Pro Shop, and as much as we never want to leave, there are a few days coming up we will be home with our families.

The Pro Shop will be closed on Thanksgiving weekend, Thursday and Friday. We will also be closed on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, New Years Eve and New Years Day. We are looking forward to a great holiday vacation. Hope you are too!

## **Orindawoods Junior Championships**

The Orindawoods Junior Championships were held October 25-November 2 at the Club. Juniors from all over Contra Costa County and beyond participated in the action. One of the things I love about this tournament is the consolation division. Players are guaranteed at least two matches.

Several of the Orindawoods juniors made a good showing. It was fun to see our kids out in action against kids from neighboring clubs and parks. Katie Reaves won the Girls 14s, while brother Peter made a good showing in the Boys 10s. Nico Haet won the Boys 14s. Samatha Lin made it to the finals of the Girls 10s playing with her left arm in a cast. Wow! Andrew Chow and Stephen Tse met in the final of the Boys 14 consolation with Stephen winning. Sydney Bell pulled off a big upset in the Girls 12s, beating the #1 seed, and made it to the final of the consolation. Jonathan Zhou won the Boys 16s round robin. Other club regulars playing in the tournament were Alan Zhou, Nathan Sharafian, David Schulz, Sofia Gamboa and Amanda Li.

Almost one hundred junior players from the local tennis scene participated in our tournament this year. It was the biggest turnout in years. Thanks for supporting this event by giving up your courts for a weekend of exciting junior tennis action.

## **Hitting a Crooked Ball Straight**

When you are at the net in doubles, it is important to determine whether your opponent can hit the ball down the line or not ("Two Reads In Doubles" Oct 13 Newsletter). The ability to hit the ball down the line is one of the key skills in doubles. I've heard the Bryan Brothers say that it is probably the key skill in determining who will win a high-level doubles match.

Remember, the team that controls the middle of the net controls the match, so if you can hit the ball down the line, that can force the other team out of the middle, opening up that key territory for you to hit though on your way victory. Especially on the crucial, pressure-packed points.

Of course hitting the ball down the alley involves a lot more than just saying, "I'll shoot this next one down the alley and catch 'em nappin'."

It is not as easy as all that, as you have probably discovered through the school of hard knocks. One would think that the easiest shot to hit down the line would be a straight shot, from the alley on your side to the alley on theirs. Unfortunately, while the geometry of that statement is true, you are leaving out physics and physiology (and perhaps psychology, but that is for another day) from the equation. Science (or reality) doesn't let you have

## **Reindeer Games**

Mark your calendars, Sunday, December 15th is when it starts raining. Er, I mean, is when we are holding our annual Reindeer Games (Rain-Oh-Deer Games).

This great tennis social is held every year (except for most years, when it rains) in December to celebrate the holiday season at the Club and around the reindeer world.

Don't be put off by the threat of rain. This is one of the most fun events we have here at Orindawoods. The Reindeer Games involves a tennis social followed by just plain social activities up on the deck. Plenty of good cheer. There is no cost for this event, but you must bring your best reindeer attitude in order to participate.

To sign up, contact Keith at the Club or Lysbeth McNeil where ever you can find her. The exact starting time will depend on the size of the turn out (some years, we have two flights), but we will hold the event in the afternoon (between 12 and 4 p.m.) on Sunday, December 15.

It is fun to plan the Reindeer Games. Compare it to planning an outdoor wedding in Seattle in December. No, all jokes aside, we love our games, and our reindeer as well. Come join us.

## **Gift Certificates and Babolat Racquets**

As most of you know, our pro shop was both recently remodeled, and we switched over to Babolat racquets. The full line of racquets is available for purchase, so if you know someone on your gift list that needs a new stick, we have plenty of great new racquets to choose from. Talk to Patric about setting your loved one up with a new frame.

And if it is lessons they need (don't we all), then gift certificates are available for lessons with Keith, Patric and Anna Marie. We'd be happy to fix that backhand right up.

Gift certificates are also available for racquets, if you would like the tennis player in your family to try out a few new frames first before deciding.

those omissions (I'm so sorry to be the bearer of bad news).

**The Trouble with Angles.** Since most balls that come to you out wide (where you have a direct view straight down their alley) have some element of angle to them, physics becomes involved, sometimes in a big, surprising way. There are several physics factors that might make the dream of your alley-shot glory more difficult. Angle, speed of the ball, spin and height all have an impact on your potential success. Let's start with angle. Simply put, the greater the angle (the more crooked the shot), the harder it is going to be to straighten out. A ball coming in at an angle (A, see Fig. 1) is going to have an angle of deflection (B). In other words, it is going to tend to bounce out wide, even if your racquet is pointing "straight" up the line (dotted line – C). The more angle the ball comes to you, the more angle of deflection. You can adjust for that by "aiming in" a bit (Fig. 2), but how far it defects is also dependent on how fast (how much force) the ball is coming onto your racquet with, and also, how forcefully you are driving the racquet into the ball. Of course, spin on the ball (topspin, sidespin or underspin) will affect the way the ball bounces off the strings as well.

**A Study in Difficulty:** In order to hit the ball down the line and deal with all this physics, footwork and positioning become very important. Two balls (A & B) traveling at the same speed, with the same spin, will travel the same distance before they bounce twice. Simple enough, the trick is, that one that is hit on an angle (B) will be going out to the side more, and not go as deep in the court (see Fig. 3) before it bounces twice. In other words, the fact that it is hit on an angle means that it seems like it is hit softer, or shorter. If you reach forward (from D to C), you will be able to hit the ball cross-court, but not down the line. To hit the straight ball (A) down the line, your racquet needs to get into position D, but to hit the ball on line B down the line, you need to get your racquet into position E where it can point straight ahead (and then still account for the angle of deflection discussed above).

**What Is Required:** In other words, to hit a crooked ball (angled shot) straight down the line, you have to get farther up the court, or let the ball come back to you. Either way, the ball has to be more to your side. I tell people to "get up next to the ball," or "think of the ball as being between you and the side fence" before you hit it. This can be difficult, because for example, in the deuce court, this means that the right-handed player hitting a forehand is basically turned sideways, and facing away (has their back to) most of the court. This is an uncomfortable position (psychologically, as well as physically) for most players, making it more difficult to hit down the line.

**Other Side Of The Net:** All this science has interesting ramifications for the player hitting the angled shot. It is actually an advantage to hit the ball softer. This will force the player to come up the court more to have the potential to hit the ball down the line. The more angle, and the shorter the shot, the more the odds are they are going to hit the ball back cross-court to you. So, for example, if you are hitting a wide serve, it is probably better to hit it softer, with more spin, as far out to the side as you can manage. Rather than hit the ball hard, which means you can't hit as much angle, and they won't have to move as far forward to be able to hit down the line. Interesting.

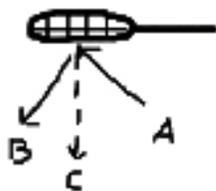


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

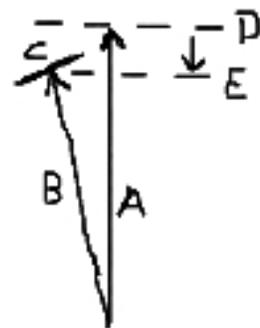


Fig. 3

### Connecting the Dots

In the old days, back when the dinosaurs roamed the earth and ruled the courts, and I learned to play, tennis instructors would keep it pretty simple. "Get your racquet back" (there were instructions here for the proper position) and then you would swing and they would say, "follow through" (and again, there was a lot of detail as to what

### Quote of the Month:

"Gamble everything for love, if you are a true human being. If not, leave this gathering. Half-heartedness does not reach into majesty. You set out to find God, but then you keep stopping for long periods at mean-spirited roadhouses. "

-- Rumi



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the proper follow through was). They would talk about the contact point ("meet the ball out in front" – whatever that meant), but for the most part, you would swing from point A (backswing) to point B (follow through) and hope something good happened in the middle (Fig. 4). Instruction has come a long way since then, as we try to focus better on what is happening at contact (the only point, in a sense, that really matters: the connection with the ball). A lot of the improvements in instruction have to do with the advent of really good video, so that we can see what is going on when the racquet is moving fast, and start teaching how to do those things that Nadal is doing out there. This adds detail to the way we go about making and learning a stroke. There are, so to speak, a lot more dots in our model swing (Fig. 5). And it is not straight.

**Time:** The commonly held belief is that we don't have time to think about all that stuff (dots) in-between, but that is actually not true. In fact, when we add more detail, we actually see much better, pay attention much better, and everything seems to slow down. I know this seems hard to believe, but it is true. Things seem much faster when we are jumping a great distance from one dot to the next (like A to B in Fig. 4).

**Black Outs:** The problem is that there are "black outs," or "white outs" between these points (dotted line between the dots – Fig. 5). In other words, in move from one point to the next, we basically just swing, and in a sense, lose consciousness. This is not a good thing, because at those brief but important moments, we are basically, out of control. The farther the dots are apart, the less conscious we are, and the more we are out of control. Or the action becomes "out of hand" as my instructor would say. We are no longer aware of what we are doing, or controlling the movement (with our hand). The head of the racquet is just swinging, and we are "holding on" for dear life.

**Meditate the Movement:** To take it to the next level, we want to be aware of what we are doing the whole time, in the space between the dots. To move the racquet handle with intention and control, rather than wiping the racquet head around and hoping something good happens. This is connecting the dots (solid line) or being mindful of every moment. (Fig. 6) Eventually, no one point becomes more important than any other. For each point has a purpose in a successful contact.

**Tricks With Time:** Again, it seems like there is not enough time to do this, and we can't afford to move this mindfully, or slowly, when in actual fact, if you want to play well, you can't afford not to look at the movements this way. Most of our errors come in these times of "blacking out," where we are not really in control of what we are doing. To play in the zone, is to experience everything, and see things that in your "normal" state of mind (confusion, anxiety, panic, desire), you do not see. If you have ever been in an accident, or similar experience, you know how everything seems to slow down. Whole lives can appear to you. In real time, in everyday living, it is not that you don't see them, we see everything, but we are so distracted that we are not aware of what we are seeing. Our focus is often on one thing, or one idea, and it is often inappropriate for maximum success.

**Why We Lose Consciousness:** There are two main reasons why players black out,

Fig. 4

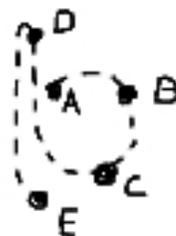
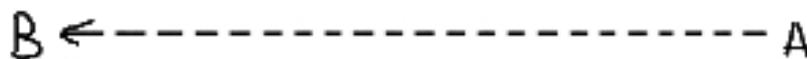


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

or loose connection with reality as it unfolds. One is fear. A good example is fear that the ball is going to get by me, or that the ball is going to bounce twice (or get too low) before I get into position. But there are other fears. Is my ball going to go in? Get past the net person? It's match point and I can't afford to miss, etc...

The other cause of blacking out is ambition, or should we say red-ing out (seeing blood). We are focusing on how hard we are going to hit it, or where we are going to hit it, how well we are going to hit it, just about anything but how we are going to hit it. We've lost the process in our desire for an outcome. "Crush it!!!!!!"

Fear and ambition seem to be on the opposite sides of the spectrum, and yet, the result is surprisingly the same: disconnection from what we are doing, the process of stroking. What follows is the resulting errors. Sometime the error is not so obvious, or is hard to detect. Maybe we don't miss, but we don't hit the ball up to our full potential, our opponent is able to capitalize on our weak shot, and we are not able to achieve the result we are looking for.

**Practice:** Or as they say in meditation, "the practice," is to notice. To be aware. In the practice of tennis, to notice when these black outs occur. To see if you can meditate the whole shot, to not lose consciousness. And when we lose connection (which will happen to everyone, no matter how good you are at the mental game), to not fuss and fret about it, but to simply come back to the focus. To the moment, to the movement.

**The Rub:** The question I have had, and you will have, is, "How can I possibly do that if the ball is being served at me at over 100 mph?"

And yet, if you just find the will (self-control) to keep connection with your body even once, you will see that it is possible (and realize how much we are normally ruled by our fears). In fact, a crazy, crazy, crazy thing happens. That 100 mph ball seems to slow down. And some report, the ball might even seem to get bigger. You observe details you have never seen before. And no matter what your opponent does, you pick the best shot, and make it with complete awareness. Everything seems strangely within your grasp.

**Leaving Perfection, Moving to Mindfulness:** There may be some shots, too big, too scary that you might not be able to meditate the movement on. At first, early in your practice, this might be every shot. Just focus on the next one. If 80% of the time you could stay connected, you would be so much better than most players are now. Even a 20% improvement would be huge, as a few points decide most matches, really. A couple fewer errors, another winner or two, and a loss becomes a win. Any improvement is huge in the area of focus and attention.

Many famous players have gone from big-time chokers to champions by improving this focus skill. Lendl, Navratilova, Andy Murray, Arthur Ashe are just four examples of people who learned to manage their fears, control their emotions, and focus on the task at hand, with amazing results. Results that seemed hopelessly out of their reach only a few recent, tough matches before. You can do it too. Good luck out there!

### ***Orindawoods Junior Tennis Program Winter 2014***

Come join Head Pro Patric Hermanson, Associate Pro Anna Marie Gamboa and our junior tennis staff for our fun, informative and competitive Winter Junior Program. The Winter Session will start the week of January 6 and run for 10 weeks. Check the website for exact pricing and times.

The format of classes will be basically the same as the fall, just a bit shorter session. The Winter Session will be followed by the Spring Session.

<b><u>Level</u></b>	<b><u>Class</u></b>	<b><u>Time(s)</u></b>	<b><u>One day/week</u></b>	<b><u>Two Days</u></b>
<b><i>I</i></b>	<b><i><u>Lil' Ones</u></i></b>	<i>Tues/Thurs 3:15-4pm</i>	<i>TBD*</i>	<i>TBD*</i>

The **Lil' Ones class** is for the always adorable 4-6 year olds. We will be developing the coordination and balance of these young players as well as giving them an introduction to tennis using age appropriate balls and court size.

<b><i>II</i></b>	<b><i><u>Future Stars Group</u></i></b>	<i>Tuesdays 4-5:30pm</i>	<i>TBD*</i>	<i>N/A</i>
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The **Future Stars Group** is for our 7 to 10 year old players. The players will be working with 10 and under balls on 36', 60' and full courts. Stroke instruction, tennis games, and match play are all part of the curriculum as we work our way up to green dot balls and full court.

<b><i>III</i></b>	<b><i><u>Tennis Development Group</u></i></b>	<i>Thursdays 4-5:30pm</i>	<i>TBD*</i>	<i>N/A</i>
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In the **Tennis Development Group** we will work on refining technique, improving footwork and developing strategic awareness for successful match play. This class is for beginning through intermediate players ages 11 thru 14.

<b><i>IV</i></b>	<b><i><u>Tournament Training Group</u></i></b>	<i>Wednesdays 4:30-6pm</i>	<i>TBD*</i>	<i>N/A</i>
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The **Tournament Training Group** is an invitation only class. Contact Patric about setting up a try-out.

**\*Check the website for 2014 prices. As always, Non-members should add \$25 (Lil' Ones, only \$15).**