



December 2015
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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

Happy Holidays!

Happy Holidays to you and your family. And we extend that to your tennis family, all the members and friends of Orindawoods. When it comes to wishing for presents, who doesn't want a better serve, or the ultimate backhand, the key to tennis success, or the magic formula for winning. And as far as giving, give your opponents and partners your best, both as a competitor and a sportsperson. Your good play makes them stronger (and you too), and your good sportsmanship makes tennis fun and enjoyable for all, win or lose.

Speaking of which, I'm sad hearing statements like, "I hate [league, junior, social, Saturday, mixed ... fill in the blank] tennis, there are so many [mean] people (I could use other words here, but this is a family publication)."

Do these "mean" people know they are ruining the game for everyone? Making a game (fun, for enjoyment, etc...) into a nightmare. Do they care if they just get their win?

I had a writing teacher once whose comments were so harsh it made me feel like I wanted to quit writing. I think she kind of lost the plot.

I don't know, but I think most people just get lost in bad behavior every once in a while. A bit lost is human, we're all human. Some people get lost for an entire decade. That's unfortunate. And most people detest, in their own private hell, their worst behavior. With a little distance, we know this behavior is not about us, but some weakness in them. But it is still unpleasant to deal with. So a nice gift this holiday season might be to work on that, find a bit happier inner place to compete. Happy Holidays!

2016 Pricing And Dues Payments

In the sidebar is listed the pricing for 2016. The dues change will take place for NEXT month's bill, January 2016, which you will receive on around December 20th.

IMPORTANT: If You Have AutoPay, change your billing at the New Year. Dues for 2016 will be \$125. We don't want you to incur late charges because you automatic payment only sent in \$120.

REMEMBER: If you are paying by check each month, please make your dues payments using the envelope included with your statement and drop that in the U.S. Mail. Neither the Club, Woodhall or Homeowner's Association Services in San Ramon are set up to take payments, and it just delays your account being accredited properly.

December 13th

Reindeer Games

The amazing, the incredible Rain-o-Deer Games will be held on Sunday December 13th from 12 to 3 p.m. at Orindawoods. You won't want to miss the puddle-splashing fun of another year's holiday season entertainment.

We will play Keith's mix-and-match tennis and enjoy holiday cheer on the deck afterwards. There is no charge for this event, and we will supply the wine and chocolate kisses. Any other kisses, you are responsible for.

If you would like to attend, please contact Keith at the club, or Lysbeth McNeill. Happy Holidays!

Orindawoods Tennis Club Fees for 2016

Club Fees

	2016
Initiation Fee:	\$100
Reinstatement Fee:	\$300
Monthly Dues	\$125
Membership on hold	\$25/mo.

Guest Fees

Prime time	\$10
Non-prime time	\$10
Junior	\$5
Team Guest Fee	\$50

Pool Guest Fees

Family	\$5
Individual	\$3

Lesson Fees

Member Drop-in Clinics	\$5
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Keith & Patric's Member Lesson Rates

½ hour	\$40
1 hour	\$70

Non-members add \$5

Group hour (4 people)	\$19 ea
Group hour (3 people)	\$25 ea
Group hour (2 people)	\$36 ea

Group 1.5 hours (5 people)	\$21 ea
Group 1.5 hours (4 people)	\$26 ea
Group 1.5 hours (3 people)	\$35 ea

Anna Marie's (Associate Pro) Member Lesson Rates

½ hour	\$35
1 hour	\$65

non-members add \$5

Group hour	\$70
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Ball Machine

Ball Machine Club	\$110/yr
1 hour Ball Machine	\$8

The Cardinal Rules

There are some key ideas that underlie any activity. In over thirty years of teaching tennis, I have found these to be true for myself, and many, many students. The Cardinal Rules of Tennis (an incomplete list):

You Hit the Easy Shots, They Hit the Hard Shots. The basic idea of strategy is to make the game easier for you, and harder for your opponents. Defend the middle, hit in the middle. Make them hit to the sides, where the mistakes are (and some winners too, see below). In doubles:

The Team that Controls the Middle, Controls the Match. For doubles, this is the most important rule of all. Think of tennis as a board game, and most board games (chess, Go, Settlers of Catan, Risk) are about controlling the board, not as much about taking pieces. Control the biggest territory, and in tennis use the sidelines as your advantage to “trap” your opponent. Let’s delve deeper:

Let Them Make The Tough Shots. “In any game or con, there is an opponent, and there is a victim. The key is to know when you are the later, so that you can become the former.” Let them have the tough shots. You (the “opponent”) want them (the “victim”) to make some of the tough shots, so they will keep trying to make them. This is the basic premise of running a casino; let the mark win some, even a lot, so they keep playing against the odds. In the end, the odds come through, and you win. Convince them:

“You’re Smarter and I’m Dumber” Ideally, I would help convince them (the victim) that they have figured my game out. They know the “magic strategy” to beat me. (for example, I keep leaving my alley wide open). They become convinced that their strategy (of low percentage shots) was the right plan because it works (some of the time). Once the victim becomes invested in “the solution”, their ego is committed and it is very hard for anyone to admit later that they were wrong, and change their tactics and strategy. Most people will go down, rather than admit their mistake. How many times have I heard, “I had the right plan” or “I was in control, I just didn’t execute enough shots.” They never even understood they were conned. Sometimes you overhear a clue like, “[Joe] doesn’t look very good, he just wins all the time.” Like it is magic or something.

You Only Get Better By Playing Better Opponents. Better opponents challenge you to get better. I have to say this is a major flaw of the USTA league system. Everyone is playing players of basically the same level, and it is very hard to improve that way. You need to be challenged. Look at a three year old at a playground. He isn’t watching the 3 year olds, or the two year olds, he can do that stuff. He’s looking at the 4 year olds. The next step in development.

Only Hit Shots You Can Make. Pretty obvious. Or put another way, “It is said that you can’t con an honest man.”

So I guess the follow up question is, how come this rule is broken more than any of the others? Like say, hitting difficult shots instead of easy shots. Of course the reason given is that my adversary is standing where the easy shots go. So then missing is better than letting them hit the ball????

The answer to that question, tells us an awful lot about ourselves, and our challenges with competition. Apparently we would rather make an error (less painful) trying to do something grand, than give the opposition an opportunity to hit a winner (or miss). We’re more afraid of them looking “grand,” than we are of doing what is in our long-term best interests. Our ego is a far bigger opponent than any other hotshot player on the other side of the net will ever be.

Aggressive Shots to Big Targets. In the past few months we have talked a lot about the various percentages in tennis, what strategies work, which don’t. “Aggressive shots to big targets” is a basic overview of the way tennis is played in 2015 at the highest level. And you can play it that way too, because it isn’t that hard (only hit shots you can make). The combination of winners and forced errors make up far more than half the points, even in singles, but especially in doubles. Playing safe, just getting the ball in and waiting for them to make a mistake (an unforced error) is not the best way to go about winning a tennis match. Of course we don’t want to make a ton of mistakes, so we need to find ways to hit aggressive shots and not miss too much. That way is to aim for a big target. Down the middle in doubles (see above), deep to the backhand side in singles, followed by more angled ball, and then a ball into the open court (usually their forehand side). In other words:

Open Up The Court By Hitting Combinations Of Shots. In singles, the best play is to move your opponent to one side of the court, so that you can hit into the other (open) side of the court. Making them hit while they are running is most likely to produce an error or weak shots. In doubles:

Set Up From The Back, Finish From The Front. In doubles, the backcourt player (server or returner) hits the ball so that it will be hit back to the net person, who has a much better chance to finish the point. Serves to the backhand (which usually limits the returner) allows the net person to move into position for the kill (middle of the court). The returner tries to hit a ball that will force a more central return (usually up the middle, could be a lob).

Remember if the last shot is hit from the back of the court, the result is 20% errors and 80% winners. The opposite is true at the net, 80% winners, 20% errors. Attack from the back by hitting “aggressive shots to big targets,” then “hit the



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:

Anna Marie Gamboa
gamboa.tennis@yahoo.com

Junior Tennis Staff:

Jeremy O'Neill
Caitlin Powell
Sofia Marino
David Schultz

Weekend Staff:

George Kaiser

Newsletter Editor:

Keith Wheeler

Associate Editors:

Patric Hermanson

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open court" from the front. Keep hitting to big targets (Only Hit Shots You Can Make).

Don't Stand Where It Lands. It is much easier to play a tennis ball if it lands several feet in front of you, or is going to land several feet behind you (so that it is a waist high volley). When the ball is landing right at your feet, it is difficult to play well, and if you do play it well, it still is rarely a forcing shot for your opponent. Remember, you want to hit the easy shots, make them hit the hard shots. In fact, when you have to hit up (the ball must go back up over the net), it often leads to a ball that is very easy for your opponent to hit (tee-ed up, much like a teaching pro feeds balls to their students to learn and build confidence). Most balls land in the middle of the court, right behind the service line. Not a good place to stand.

It's Much Easier to Make Them Play Bad, Than For You To Play Great. How many times a year to you play great? Everything is clicking, you are "lights out" good? For most players, the answer is a couple of times a year. And that would be a good year. Yet many players think they have to win a match by hitting winners, rather than help their opponent to lose. They are setting up their strategy so that they have to play great, and it just doesn't happen that often.

This does not mean that you should just play it safe, and only get the ball back. You need to help your opponent to lose by giving them tough shots (but not ones that require the "lights out" performance by you – only hit shots you can make). You need to position yourself in such a way that you cover their easy shots, and invite them to try ones that only work occasionally, but work enough that they will get conned into trying them too often. (because "you're smarter and I'm dumber").

You Play Well Because You Are Having Fun, Not Having Fun Because You Played Well.

Most people misunderstand fun and therefore miss use the immense energy it provides. Fun can be a powerful tool, but most people look at fun as merely a reward, rather than something experienced in the moment. They allow themselves to feel happy if things go well, rather than be happy, and see what develops. One way adds to your success and enjoyment, and the other, just puts pressure on you "to create fun through results".

If You Like Winning, You've Gotta Love It! You have to love it all, the adversity, the craziness, the challenges and the successes. When somebody cheats, you say to yourself, "Really, is that the best you've got for me?" Joy is the key to success. Calmness with energy. The best have it, how do you get it?

Between Points, Manage Your Mental / Emotional State. "The greatest opponent will hide in the last place you will ever look." (Hint: your ego). Our emotions, our more primal brain, takes over when there is a threat. We fight, we flight, or we freeze. It's basic defense in a life-threatening situation.

Losing to Betty in a tennis match is not a life-threatening situation, but it can feel like one, and our primal brain takes over. Our ego hijacks our brain, convinces us that it is us, that we are threatened, and continues to react in a way that doesn't serve us.

What we have to do, through the skills of our mental game, is keep the more evolved, thinking brain (cerebral cortex) running the show. Remember, joy, enjoyment, is the key. Nothing beats joy, not even fear. Be a joy junkie. Stay there, stay in joy, no matter what happens. Defend joy, with all your soul. And when you get knocked off your feet, get back to joy as best you can. Sometimes you need determination, which is intense, but positive, to crawl back from the desire to fight, to flight, or to freeze.

Therefore your focus should be much more on your mental / emotional state, than who just won the last point. Your opponent will try to throw you off (by playing well, pushing, cheating, weird beyond belief personality, crappy fashion sense, disingenuous compliments, you name it, they'll try it, BECAUSE IT WORKS, if you let it).

When the point ends, forget the past, calm down (deep breaths), plan the next point (visualize), energize (move your feet) & focus (control your eyes). You have 20-25 seconds between points, use it to prepare to play your best. It's the most important time in the match, and you're not even "playing". Then let go and let it flow. Good luck out there!

Tennis Politics and Policies:

Five Things, USTA

United States Tennis Association is the leader of tennis in our country, and much of the league play that is available to our members is offered by USTA. (There are some local leagues as well, BALL, Fall, Spring and for juniors, USPTA's Contra Costa Tournaments). League play is great. It's a wonderful opportunity to test your skills in competition. It is what keeps many of us playing. However, the goal is to grow the game. Here are five ways the USTA (and league play in general) are hurting tennis.

1. **No Off Season.** Leagues have pretty much become back-to-back, year around. There was recently an initiative to have four league-free weekends (out of 52 weekends) per year (for club events, things like Ace It! ect...), and USTA couldn't fit it in the schedule. There was no room if they were going to fit, 40+, 18+, Mixed, Senior, Combo, playoffs, sectionals, regionals, nationals, blah, blah, blah... In fact, the playoffs overlap with the next season.

Players need breaks, especially if they want to improve. It is hard to practice that new serve you have been working on, when you have to play a match. If you are always playing matches, there is no opportunity to work on your game. Not to mention, what about fun tennis? "You mean, tennis is suppose to be fun?" And god forbid, rest and recovery. Solution: create an offseason. Don't play every league offered. Some need a 12 Step Program for this.

2. **Line Calls and other Rule Issues and Controversies.** Officiating is the single biggest problem in league tennis. And the problem is, there are no officials. The ugliness that ensues often makes people quit playing. How many mean, vicious, narcissistic, unscrupled, type A people do you have to run into before you say, "You know, leagues aren't for me. I think I'll do something else with my social / recreation time."

Every other recreational sport has officials in some capacity. Then everyone blames the ref, not their opponents. It's part of officiating. And to make impartial decisions (hopefully correct, but make decisions all the same).

I know, tennis a gentleman's sport, ya-dee-ya. If everyone had the same Victorian values of honor and honesty that existed when that idea of gentleman's sport started, then that would be fine. (Honor and fairness were more valued than winning. People were ostracized for bad behavior. Now we practically ostracize people for losing). The world has changed. Dog-eat-dog / me-first societal narcissism vs. call your own lines. Those two don't work well together. How much proof do we need? How many more honest people have to quit and leave leagues for jerks?

This is actually a huge conflict for American culture in general: A strong Puritanical sense of right and wrong, vs. free-loving, narcissistic sense of life, liberty and the pursuit of [my] happiness. Need another example? Taxes, IRS...

Which leads to the wonderful double standard, which should never exist if there are referees: Who is the worse sportsman, the person who is cheating, or the person who says the other person is cheating? (i.e. the problem, or the person making a scene about the problem?). Solution: Protect your joy at all costs. Refuse to let bad behavior change you. The way you set boundaries on bad behavior shouldn't push you into self-destructive behavior.

3. **You Only Get Better By Playing Better Players.** The USTA leagues are designed to be even. Great for completion, a real plus. 3.5s play against 3.5s, which makes it so everyone has a chance to win (go to Nationals, having the life-filling experience of winning a tee-shirt). Unfortunately you get better much faster when you are challenged by better players. 3.5s need to play 4.5s or 5.0s every once in a while. Yeah, get crushed, but see what it takes to be better. Say to yourself with real visceral knowledge, "I want to play like that!" Solution: play tournaments or practice matches with stronger players (and be the stronger opponent sometimes for friends that aren't as good as you are).

4. **A Rewards Failure.** If you can win a National Title at 3.0, why would you want to move up and lose at 3.5? Giving a title at every level just encourages sandbagging. The key to USTA league "success" is to get as many players that are almost 4.0 to play on your 3.5 team. The reward isn't for improving and becoming a better tennis player; it is for winning at a lower level. That's messed up. I don't want to take away from anyone's accomplishment. It's great that after a couple of years a 3.0 can compete for a title. It's just you shouldn't be competing for the same title after you have been playing 10 years. Solution: don't buy into the trophy chase, or "playing for the tee." Be the best you can be.

5. **USTA Doesn't lead, It Follows** (the money). USTA doesn't lead, it does what's best for it's income line. They survey the league players, the league players say, "we want more leagues!" For USTA : More leagues = more income. For example the decision to let players play in different leagues (one in Contra Costa, another in East Bay) doubles the revenue, but just encourages players to be free agents, no sense of loyalty to anything other than which team gives them the best chance to go to Nationals. In addition, if a team wins a league, but their top players decide to play for another team, then that team might not have won the league in the first place, and someone else might have gotten to go to playoffs. You should win the league with your team, not a team of hired guns who go somewhere else. This situation is great for the individual (gets to play a ton of tennis), but lousy for friends, teams and clubs, when there is no loyalty. And it insures that the same people each year are in the playoffs, sectionals and regionals, because they have double the chance to get there.

The point is we need USTA to do what is best for the sport, which includes an off season, dealing with the officiating problem, allow for some completion where different levels play each other and rewarding people for improving, and not for dumbing down. So above are partial solutions we can take for each of these issues, but shouldn't USTA be our partners in solving these issues, and not be part of the problem? Come on USTA, it's your serve.