



February 2013
Volume 19, Issue 2

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

Valentine's Day

Since February is the month of love, you are counseled to win all your matches luv and luv. Good luck with that. Read below and we'll give you a few ideas for accomplishing your goal. And happy Valentine's Day!

Tennis and Winter Days

Ah, those beautiful winter days. No, I don't mean 22 degrees and a fresh layer of powder on top of your favorite run at Tahoe (mine is "Our Father...", if you must know. Just the name makes it top of the list, not to mention the challenge and the moguls). No, I'm talking about those clear, cool days with no wind that are just perfect for tennis (there is one of those days just outside my window as I write this – call it inspiration). Sometimes these winter gems start out a bit on the cool side (we've had our fair share of low 30s out there this winter), but then they warm to just paradise conditions from about 9:30 to about 3. My favorite days of the year. Of course in the winter there are some storms, and the dreaded winter valley fog (hate that stuff, the courts are wet and it didn't even rain), but then, like a blessing, comes another one of those wonderful, clear winter days. Perfection achieved, don't miss them. Have your racquet out by the front door and ready to go.

Club Refrigerator

Just a reminder, the Club refrigerator is not for putting the food you brought to a match that you don't want to take back home with you and you feel too guilty to throw away. Month-old snacks are not appealing, trust me. The refrigerator is just for storing food that you are going to use that day.

Tennis Tip:

The Y of Good Doubles

Recently I listened to the Bryan Brothers talk about good doubles, and the secrets of their success. Most of it was pretty basic stuff, stuff we have heard over and over again. But there were also some real gems of wisdom worth repeating here, and expanding on. Ideas that clearly separate Mike and Bob from the field in terms of playing doubles over the last ten years.

The Key: They thought that the key to success in doubles was getting as many easy volleys as possible. That is their primary goal when they play. All their shots, their serves, returns, movement, is designed to get one of them an easy volley.

So 7 out of 10 easy volleys is better than 5 out of 10 or 3 out of 10. Obvious. The less obvious part is if you get 7 out of 10 easy volleys and you lose the other 3 points that is better than 3 out of 10 easy volleys and you get all ten shots back. We must remember that simply getting a ball back does not mean I'm going to win the point, or the match. A ball returned into play from a defensive position, against an opponent in an offensive position will usually (after a few shots sometimes) result in you losing the point. Especially if your opponent knows how to play (i.e. doesn't just roll over and miss when you get a ball back in play). Another way to say this is that steady play counts for more at 3.0 than 4.5. At 4.5, you need some consistency, but you have to do something with the ball. And you **must** position well.

So in the big picture, we are willing to lose some points, in order to get more easy volleys more often (easy volleys being ones that we are more likely to be able to put away). This understanding is crucial to getting better,

Real Tennis Players

When I was a kid (some would say young and foolish), I was so hungry for tennis, that I would play in the most challenging of conditions. My dad and I would even play in the rain some times (I was young -- don't know what his excuse was – now that I reflect on it – might be a hereditary issue instead, evidence seems to point that way). I remember one time Dad purchased these rubber tennis balls just for the occasion, so the balls wouldn't even get wet, or should I say, heavy. Then there were the cold mornings, where my mom made mittens that had a hole in them so that you could insert the racquet, and still keep your hand warm at the same time (I guess you could say she was codependent in this crazy endeavor). Tennis mittens. Very cozy. The height of luxury. Of course, playing on a court that was only partially dry (most would label: wet) was not even considered a challenge.

These days, I have a friend down on the Peninsula that is famous for teaching in the rain. No rainouts, no cancelations. Don't know if I'll go that far, but lessons in the rain have happened before from time to time in the past, I must confess.

Now I'm not recommending any of these activities (safety must be a consideration, after all), but this kind of foul weather behavior is where I came up with the concept of the "real tennis players." The ones that are too crazy to come in out of the rain, so to speak. Now I have developed a bit of wisdom over the years and try not to put myself in such adverse conditions, but somehow I still admire those players who get out there and fight for their tennis time in marginal conditions.

After all, anyone can play and have a good time when it is 70 degrees, the wind is calm and the sun is never in your eyes. But those who can make a good time out of a situation where there is little chance that could happen, those are the real players. So I salute you, the real tennis players.

and playing better doubles. Simply put, **the team with the most easy volleys almost always wins**, especially if there is a decided advantage in the number of those easy volleys.

Where: I need to put myself in a position where there will be more easy volleys, and that position is **close to the net** (zone 1, or the front half of the service box). When I am close to the net, there may be an occasional shot that comes too fast to get, but I'm willing to lose that point, to get more easy shots most of the time. How close? Close to the net means I need to worry that I might be running into the net, or hitting the ball on the other side (both rule infractions) at least some of the time. That is close.

Up or Down: Volleys can be divided into two basic categories. Ones that can be hit down into the court, and ones that have to be hit forward or up over the net first, before they can fall back down into the court. Think of it this way: if you are close enough to the net, all the balls that are coming over will be high, that is, balls that you can hit down into the court. These are easier volleys. Their path to the target is direct. You can hit them harder, the net is less of a factor, you can angle them off easier and you are so much closer to your opponent, so they have little time to react. The farther you are off the net, the more you have to hit the ball up over the net first, before you can worry about dropping the ball back down into the court. The net becomes a huge factor in your shot. On these "lower" volleys (ones you have to hit forward or up), you really have two targets. First you have to hit it over the net, and then you have to hit it in such a way that it will fall down into the court. These volleys are much harder to pull off. Easy volleys, high volleys close to the net, have a direct path to the target.

So right on top of the net, every ball that comes over is "high," a ball I can hit down. As I back up, the height at which the ball needs to be to be high (be able to hit down) gradually rises, until I get back to the base line, and it is well over my head (serves can not be hit down directly into the court unless you are 6'8" or so). A volley in Zone 2 (around the service line) has to be hit forward or up, and is therefore much more difficult than a volley at the net, which can be hit directly towards its target on the ground.

How, Why, or Y? So now we know that the key is to get close to the net. My partner in college used to always say, "If you're not closing [in on the net], you're losing." But how do I move closer to the net in a way that makes me the most effective. A lot of people fear that being close just makes them a bigger, better target, easier to get pegged, and that is true some of the time.

Here again, the Bryans give us some insights into successful doubles. They say you move straight forward, and then branch off to one side or the other at the moment your opponent hits the ball. In other words, if seen from above, your movement pattern looks like the letter "Y", where you choose one of the two branches. Straight first, then veer off to one side or the other (see Fig. A, page 4). The moving straight forward disguises which way you are going to move, and it gets you closer to the net. Both key ingredients in being a better net player. Many players, when they move, move more in a "V" pattern (Fig. B), which means they have to either wait until their opponent hits the ball (and thus they won't get close to the net) or they start sooner, and give away which way they are going (allowing their opponent to hit the ball behind them into the open court). Notice that moving sooner, using a Y pattern, gets you closer to the net, and also means you can cover more area (compared to a V pattern, where you have to wait to not give away your position -- Fig. C). So that is why we want to move in a Y pattern.

What? So now net play gets really tricky. Or should we say challenging, but fun (challenging is fun). Volleys are easier if you know what is coming (think how great you hit off the ball machine or in a drill where you know what shot is coming). In other words, you have already turned, have your racquet up in position, and are so close to the net you can't miss. This is what the Bryans do. In other words, they guess where the ball is going and turn and move there before their opponent hits. What?!?!?!?! Guess????!!!!????!!!

Now perhaps guess is a bit misleading, because how much guessing is there really going on here? Better to call it a prediction, or an educated guess. A probability. A guess made from considering all the factors, and predicting the likely outcome. That's how you get even more easy volleys than just simply getting closer to the net.

After all, when you are closer to the net, things happen really fast, and if you are already turned and have your racquet up, a shot can be "easy" that would have been difficult if you had to move forward and get ready too. And you are less likely to get pegged with the racquet up. So some guessing gets you more easy volleys. And the goal is: **more easy volleys.**

How, once again: So how do I guess? If you pay attention to tennis, you know more about predicting than you may think or believe.

Crosscourt & Middle: First of all, as I have mentioned many times here, most balls go crosscourt, and cross the middle section of the net. If you just went there all the time, with your racquet up, you would be a lot better. My buzz words: "The team that controls the middle, controls the match."

Next helpful fact: Most players find it much more easy to hit across their bodies than inside out. This is why a lot of players actually hit alley shots better from the middle of

Quote of the Month:

"Bring on the clowns, the jokers and the fools, I've had the time of my life, and the life of my time, in the company of fools."

--Alan Doyle



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the court (where the shot is really like a crosscourt shot).

Tactical considerations: generally players attempt to hit the ball away from the net person (again, usually crosscourt). Very predictable.

Difficulty of shot. See how tough your team's shot to your opponent is, the tougher the shot, the more likely they are going away from the net person (defend rather than attack). If they have an easier shot, especially out wide, they are more likely to take a shot at the alley (attack).

Playing favorites: People have favorite shots, and go-to shots they hit under pressure. If you play someone all the time, you have to know these. Open your eyes. Even with someone you are seeing for the first time, after a set or so, you are going to have some ideas about what they like to do. For example in mixed, the man usually hits at the woman, or tries to go down her alley. Women, don't act surprised, offended, etc... be ready and beat them at their own game. Most smart players go after the weaker player or their weaker shot. Especially on big, "must win" points. Get ready. Commit. Trust what you know. Believe. Believe in yourself.

OK, I admit, this takes some thinking, some knowledge of the game, some reading the situation (or getting to know your opponent, your partner and yourself), some psychology, and some trusting your gut (instincts). The other option is be late and lose.

Mistakes will be made. You will get fooled, make errors in judgment, move the wrong way. In the moment, mistakes can be painful. We look foolish when we are wrong. Ouch!

But the pain really only happens if you give too much importance to that one shot or point. Remember, you don't have to get this right every time. That is not the goal. The goal is to get more easy shots than if you did nothing. And get more easy shots than your opponent. If you look foolish some of the time, and also get more easy volleys, you are winning. And just like anything else, the more you practice "guessing", the better you get at it. **So think big picture, not little mistake.** Big win, not little fool. Or even better yet, enjoy playing the fool from time to time. It gives you freedom and power.

Don't Forget: A player who moves around at the net is a distraction, and intimidating. I played a couple of weeks ago, and I used this Y movement pattern and moved a lot more than I usually do when I play doubles. I felt slightly out of control, missed a few easy volleys (more than normal), guessed wrong a few times ... and won easily, 6-2, 6-2. Way more easily than I normally do with those guys. I missed more, was wrong more often, felt a bit on the edge of being out of control, and the result of all that was that my opponents were so rattled and intimidated that they spent so much time and effort trying to deal with me that they forgot to make their shots. I forced errors.

One of my students played a mixed match recently where the opponent's man really controlled the net and they lost the first set 6-2. But my student's team really went after this net person, and he ended up with some really tough shots, had to duck some, got passed some, and then decided, even though he was winning, that he should move back into a more defensible position. My student and her partner went on to win the match 2-6, 6-1, 6-0. The opponent forgot what was important, stay close to the net, control the middle and get more easy volleys. So what if you defend better, you are going to lose!

It's the War, Stupid: The goal is to win the war (the match), not the individual battles (points). This is so hard to remember when we are playing and get caught up in the passion and emotion of the action. I always look to George Washington here as my inspiration. Here is a general who lost practically every battle he fought, but he won the last one (at Yorktown), the British gave up because they just couldn't catch him, and the result was the founding of our country. George Washington, a man who had his eye firmly fixed on the big prize, and didn't get caught up in the little stuff.

A Note To All You Partners, Captains and Teammates Out There: And of course it was more than George Washington. The people he worked for knew George knew what he was doing too, and trusted him. Encouraged him, supported him. Even when he lost a battle that "seemed" important, like losing New York City, they still kept their eyes on the prize. It's OK to make mistakes, it is OK to lose points, and it is OK to get passed. **Get more easy volleys.** Keep the faith, and good luck out there!

Fig. A
Y Pattern—strong,
good deception, great
court coverage

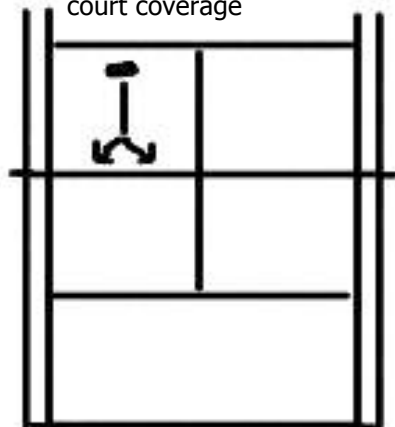


Fig. B
V Pattern – weaker, easy
to read, less coverage

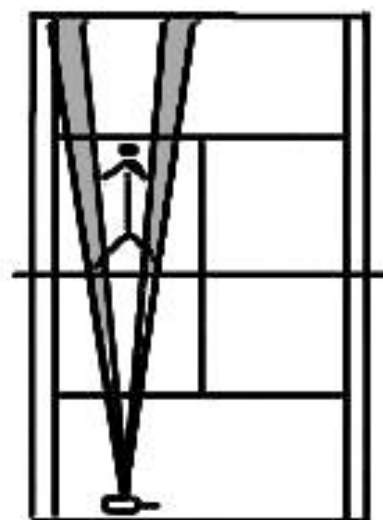
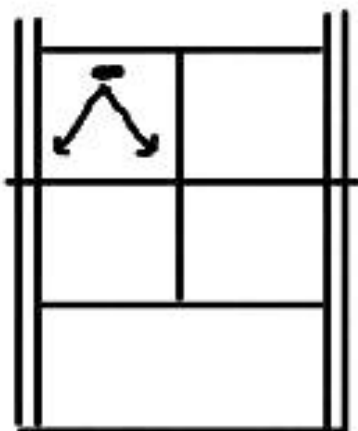


Fig.
C

OWTC Winter Junior Tennis Program

January 14th – March 15th

The 2013 Winter Junior Clinics began the week of January 14th and continue thru the week of March 15th. This 9-week session will be led by Head Pro Patric Hermanson and Assistant Pro Anna Marie Gamboa.

The Spring Session will have the same basic format (slightly longer, different prices) and starts at the end of March if you are looking ahead.

The Level I and II classes will be taught using aspects of the USTA Quickstart / Ten and Under Tennis Program. Level III will also spend time using Quickstart.

Class Schedule:

Level	Class	Time (s)	One day/week	Two
I	Lil' Ones <i>The Lil' Ones 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.</i>	Tues/Thursday 3:15-4pm	\$115	\$195
II	Future Stars Group <i>The Future Stars Group is for our 7 to 10 year old players. The players will be working with Quickstart balls on 36" and 60" courts. Stroke instruction, tennis games, and match play are all part of the curriculum.</i>	Tuesdays 4-5:30pm	\$225	n/a
III	10s Development Group <i>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 through 14.</i>	Thursdays 4-5:30pm	\$225	n/a
IV	Tournament Training <i>The Tournament Training Group is an invitation only class. Contact Patric about setting up a try-out.</i>	Wednesdays 4:30-6pm	\$235	n/a

***Non-members should add \$25 (Lil' Ones, only \$15).**

We have factored into the cost of the clinics, the potential of two weeks of missed classes due to rain, illness, vacations, etc...

Special Discount: 10% discount off the cost of the 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 update.

Tennis Shoes Required (no black soled shoes that mark the court).

For more information or to sign up, please check the club website, or call Keith or Patric at the Pro Shop (925-254-1065) or you can also e-mail Patric at patrictennis@yahoo.com.