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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

Best Books For Tennis

There are several really great tennis books available, and many good ones. Here are a few:

- *Open* by Andre Agassi. It's tough to be really good at something, especially from an early age when the choice of direction is not your own. I think most fans, and most recreational players, have no idea what it is like to be this good. Steffi's revelation that of course she hates tennis, all the good players do, is worth the price of the book alone. The problem with doing something you love is always doing it too much. And how do you get really good without doing it too much? The life of a star. Many rewards, many pains.
- *Winning Ugly* by Brad Gilbert. Tactics and strategy from the master. Useful stuff for every competitive player, no matter what level.
- *The New Toughness Training for Sports* by James Loehr. The best book on the mental/emotional game from the best sport psychologist in the world.
- *Inner Game of Tennis* by Tim Galloway. This book is still the best book on focus around. I actually preferred his second tennis book, *Inner Tennis, Playing the Game*, which is out of print, but can be found used.

For technical, stroke production stuff, the Internet has some useful resources for a small fee. **TennisOne.com** and **TennisPlayer.net** are both very good. But for learning strokes, there is really no substitute for interaction with a trained professional (in my unbiased opinion). One of my regrets as a junior was that I didn't have the opportunity to take more lessons. Lessons both improve your strokes, and prevent bad habits from forming. Books and websites can only take you so far with the physical parts of the game.

Tennis Tip

Cause and Effect

I'm always searching for new ways to explain the process of hitting a tennis ball. Each student hears instruction a bit differently based on their experience, ability and background. Finding the explanation that makes sense to each person is the trick of teaching tennis, and of communication in general. This article represents another perspective in how we go about hitting a tennis ball.

Looking Ahead

We are already a month into the new decade. Can you believe it? Your resolution to have a better backhand in 2010 is already a month underway. Hope it is going well. This is a good time to kind of get a sense of the upcoming tennis year, both locally and on the world tennis scene (**in bold**).

- USTA Mixed Doubles season in progress
- Spring League, in progress
- BALL League, in progress
- Winter Junior Program, in progress (space available)
- **Australian Open 1/18-1/31**
- **SAP Open 2/8-2/14**
- **Indian Wells Club Trip 3/12-15 (tournament 3/8-3/21)**
- USTA Adult league, reg. starts 1/11, play starts 3/15, ends 7/11
- Spring Junior Program, 3/15-6/11
- USTA 50+ reg. starts 5/9, play 7/12-10/3
- **French Open 5/23-6/6**
- Monday Night Team Tennis, reg. in May, play begins 6/7, ends 8/30
- Summer Junior Program, each week starting 6/14 for 8 weeks.
- **Wimbledon 6/21-7/4**
- Ace It! Breast Cancer Awareness Day, tentatively 6/26
- USTA Combo League, reg. 5/9, play 7/5-10/10
- **Bank of the West 7/26-8/1**
- Court Repair, Court One, August
- **US Open 8/30-9/12**
- Fall Junior Program, starts 8/30 (tentative)
- USTA Senior, reg. 7/20, play 9/28-2/20/2011
- Fall League, reg. summer, play starts in Sept
- BALL League, reg. summer, play 9/10-3/11

In addition, there are the weekly men's and women's clinics. We would also like to revive our Twilight tennis parties this summer, but with a weekend format so more working people can enjoy the tennis and BBQ.

What Happens Just Before Contact? (or Temporary Insanity)

One of the things that fascinates me in playing a tennis shot, is what happens right before contact. Most of us understand what we want to do 99% of the time. But somehow, right before contact, often that all gets tossed out the window, and we do something we can't explain or even really justify after the hit. We had no intention of slapping at the ball, or over-hitting, or reaching, or locking up, or whatever the problem may be. Yet something happened, and it caused us to fail in our execution of the shot.

I've often felt that if we can *control these thoughts* that we have right before contact, most of our problems, and errors, would go away. If we can just keep the right focus, stay the course in adversity.

So what we think right before contact is a cause, and what happens after that is the effect. It seems to me, if we can keep useful thoughts in mind, and avoid giving into the thoughts or ideas that hurt us, we will do much better at this difficult game.

Pyramid of Performance

If we look at the pyramid of performance, we see that the base is our philosophy or spiritual beliefs. On top of that are the mental and the emotional elements, and finally physical performance at the tip of the triangle. If we don't get our beliefs right, the foundation right, whatever is on top of that is going to have problems. I spend a great deal of time in teaching *getting the philosophy right*, and *then the energy right*, because without that, there is little chance for success.

By philosophy, I don't mean how you feel about God, Sartre or Descartes, but the idea that a ball is stroked, or driven, and not swung or swatted at. That you play tennis with your body, your feet, and not predominantly with your arm, hand or wrist.

So it is important to start with the right ideas, the right plan for our stroke. That will lead to creating the proper energy from *leverage and torque* primarily, and *not from swing*, or momentum.

Helpful Thoughts

Our thoughts affect what will happen next. So how do we prepare to hit a stroke in tennis? What part

does the conscious mind play? When we are learning a stroke, the conscious mind is much more involved than when we are masters of a stroke and playing more unconsciously. Still, even in the master, there are thoughts, and the mind is never completely quiet or devoid of thinking. The secret, as sports psychologist Allen Fox put so beautifully, is to *only think thoughts that help you*.

Stop Micro-managing! Think Big Picture

What are those helpful thoughts? Well, certainly, micro-managing the stroke does not work. There are millions and millions of signals traveling back and forth between the brain and the muscles as you execute one single forehand. Trying to control this process by focusing on one or two of these impulses messes up the whole thing.

We need to think big picture, with images that affect large parts of this interaction between brain and muscles. Thinking in terms of rhythm and tempo are very useful in this regard.

But if we were to focus in on some technical aspects of improving our swing, I want to suggest that we *focus more on the cause, and not on the parts that*

Quote of the Month:

Invictus

William Ernest Henley

OUT of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

end up being more the effect. If we are going to try to improve by controlling part of this stroking action, the place to focus is on the body, on the larger parts and muscle groups. The very fast, flexible, mobile parts of the body, like the hands and wrists, should be dealt with much more passively.

The strong, slower parts of the body control the shot. So the legs, trunk, shoulders are used to keep the movements, and the shot under control. The fast, flexible parts of the body, the arms, hands, wrists create the speed necessary for power. It is important that we keep these smaller, speed parts of the body in alignment, and not just flopping all over the place. This is what the wind-up, or preparation phase of the stroke is for. We align the various parts of the body to the ball (feet, trunk, shoulder, arm, hands, eyes).

Wag the Tail/Don't let the Tail Wag You

In simple terms, think of moving the feet, the body, the shoulders, and keep the hands loose and flexible. When the body moves (the cause), the hands will then move (the effect) and add pace and power to the shot. You want the dog to wag the tail, and not the tail to wag the dog.

Your arm should move because it was initiated by the body moving, and not your body moving to try to keep up with your arm. This means that the hands will move very little in the proper stroke. The stroke is largely a body motion. But if the hands are loose, they will move very fast, for a very short distance right at impact, adding great power to the shot. If we try to over-control the hand, hold it firm, for example, or strong, the quickness and thus the power will be lost. Most players who lack power are too strong on the grip, or trying too hard.

Let It Happen; Rhythm and Timing

If we can move the body in the right motions, and position the arm properly and *keep it loose, the stroke will happen.* Most errors come when our brain short circuits the body and goes straight to giving commands to the hands. The hands move too fast, and are mistimed, and the shot is missed. A jab here, a snap there, a stretch. Or it can go the other way, and the grip gets too strong. Flexibility, speed and thus power is lost, and the stroke is just pushed.

These two things are essentially what happen when a *player panics, or comes under stress.* We try to make things happen, instead of letting things happen. The player who has learned to play largely unconsciously really just stays with rhythm and timing, letting the body do what it does best by staying out of its way. So focus your mental energy on moving the body, and let the hands be the effect.

Winter and Renewal

Winter is the time for renewal. A time to rest, regain our strength and prepare for the growing season. In tennis, this means that perhaps we don't play as much. Some of our games get rained out. It is also a nice time to work on new strokes and strategies that you want to have at your disposal later in the year. Build our strength up for the upcoming season.

Still Plenty of Tennis at the Woods

Right now, we are at the start of the USTA mixed season. The senior season is just wrapping up. WCRC doubles is in full swing. Spring league is starting, BALL league is winding down. And we are forming teams for the upcoming USTA adult season. For those who don't play leagues this is a great time to hone your game for the more active summer tennis season. I always thought the winter was a time when I could really improve, while everyone else just sat around waiting for a nice day to play.

Pros in Winter: When We're Not Teaching, We're Learning

Winter is a time when your teaching pros get some rest (due to the rain), and prepare for the New Year. We attend the local NorCal USPTA convention, and study the latest and greatest techniques. I enjoy going to the Indian Wells professional tennis event to see the latest moves, strategies and techniques being played by the top players in the game. While the rest of us don't play at that level, there is much to be



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@sbcglobal.net

Head Pro:
Patric Hermanson
Patrictennis@yahoo.com

Associate Pro:
Brad Shak
bcklshak@gmail.com

Junior Tennis Staff:
Emily Spitz
Victoria Shepard

Weekend Staff:
Courtney Krakow

Newsletter Editor:
Keith Wheeler

Associate Editors:
Patric Hermanson
Marcy Sharafian

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learned by watching the best. Pros, whose livelihood depends on their performance, tend to do things that work the best, and are the easiest to execute. That is not a bad model to copy, even if we don't hit exactly like Roger, Rafa or Juan Martin.

This is a great time of the year to watch tennis, with the Australian Open on TV, and the SAP and Indian Wells tournaments relatively near by and easy to get to.

Cross-training is also good for your tennis. So we may see you on the ski slopes, walking the reservoir or working out at the gym. Squeegeeing is one of the best cross training exercises of all, and it gets you closer to playing some tennis on an otherwise wet day.

Winter Junior Program

The 2010 Winter Junior Clinics began the week of **January 4th**, and will continue thru the week of **March 8th**. Space is still available. The **Spring Program** will follow (starting March 15) and follow the same schedule. Program leaders for the 10-week session are Head Pro **Patric Hermanson** and new Assistant Pro **Brad Shak**. Coach Patric and Coach Brad will incorporate aspects of the USTA Quickstart Program into the Level I and II classes. Level III will also spend some time using Quickstart. Here is the winter class line-up:

I. Lil' Ones (Ages 4-6) Tues/Thurs 3:15-4pm \$115 (1 day/wk), \$190* (2 days)*

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.

*II. Future Stars Group (Ages 7-10) Tuesdays 4-5:30pm \$225**

The Future Stars Group is for players with no tennis experience to those who have played a year or two.

*III. Tennis Development Group (Ages 11-13) Thursdays 4-5:30pm \$225**

The Tennis Development Group is for our beginner to intermediate junior high schoolers, and for the younger players who can hit the ball back 4 to 5 times per rally and can serve the ball in from the baseline.

*IV. Tournament Training Group Wednesdays 4:30-6:00pm \$225**

The Tournament Training Group is an invitation only class. Contact Patric about setting up a try-out.

***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 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 condition update. Tennis shoes required (no black soled shoes).
- For more information or to sign up, please check out the club website or call Keith or Patric at the Pro Shop , or you can also e-mail Patric at Patrictennis@yahoo.com.

Lessons With Brad

Don't forget, our new Associate Pro Brad Shak is now available to teach lessons to all ages and abilities. Brad is at the Club Tuesdays through Sundays. To set up a lesson with Brad, call 254-1065 or write him at bcklshak@gmail.com.