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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

Finding the Fun in Winter Tennis

Wet, Damp Or Just Plain Freezing

I set my record a couple of weeks ago. I started my 7:30 lesson on a Monday morning at 28 degrees. First time I have ever taught in the 20s before. I can't say that it is a behavior that I want to repeat in the near or even distant future. The lesson was fun as long as we avoided the frozen parts of the court. It also proved to be a great opportunity to work on volleys and the net game as under about 35 degrees, tennis balls tend to stop bouncing to any reliable or playable height.

The following Monday, it was twenty degrees warmer. But the fog was so thick, we couldn't even begin to think about playing on the damp courts. Dry courts are hard to predict, just like the weather.

As I write this newsletter on a cool Thursday morning, the courts are a bit damp, but some hearty souls are out there giving tennis a go. Seems a little dangerous for lessons, so Patric and I have canceled ours, but the spirit to play in some members is just too strong to be denied.

For courts to dry, we must refer ourselves to those wonderful second grade lessons, and all discussion about clouds, wind, sun and humidity all leading to, or limiting evaporation. OK, a bit of squeegeeing can help finish up.

Safety must always be the main concern. How wet is too wet? When does damp become dangerous? What is dry?

As for safety, for some, any dampness at all is too much. Players often go by this simple test: if you walk on a court, and you can see your footprints outlined in water, then there is too much water on the court to play safely.

Now I confess I have played tennis in the rain. And I mean rain, not dampness. But I was much younger then, and my dad and I used special rubber tennis balls. I am much wiser now. I can't speak for my dad, who was my current age at the time.

So we all have stories of such foolishness. My latest is that I played when it was 28 degrees. Hey, at least we could say we were real players and not wimps.

Editorial: Tennis Rule Changes

There has been a major change, or mistake made in the crafting of the rules of tennis for 2011 as published by the USTA. In an unofficiated match the Code now states that if a ball is mistakenly called out, and then you correct the call, you lose the point.

Save The Date: Saturday, June 25

Ace It! is our all-day, breast cancer awareness benefit here at Orindawoods. For those of you who have not participated in Ace It! before, it is a fun day of tennis. The day starts with instructional clinics by local pros, followed by a great lunch, and the Ace It! Tournament in the afternoon. All money goes towards supporting some function of the Alta Bates Breast Center.

Registration will begin in April. For now, please save the date!

Junior Clinics Underway

Our Winter Junior program is underway and we have a great bunch of kids out there learning the game of tennis. There is still space available, if your young one would like to join us. See page four below for all the details.

Weather Updates

Yeah, it's winter. It rains, it fogs, it damps and it blows.

Sometimes it freezes, and sometimes it snows.

But at Orindawoods, we're on top of the weather, or perhaps the weather is on top of us.

If you need to know the court conditions, we have three options:

- 1) Our court cam updates every 5 minutes to give you a picture of the courts.
- 2) We update weather conditions on the home page of the website as the conditions change.
- 3) Our outgoing phone message if you call.

Doubles Quick Tips

There are a few basic philosophies that I like to teach in my doubles clinics. For quick inspiration, reminders and improvement, here they are:

1. The team that controls the middle, controls the match. So hit to the middle, defend the middle.
2. Angle to angle, middle to middle, hit the ball back the way it came.
3. Only hit shots you can make (be honest).
4. Hit deep, defend deep, hit short, defend short. i.e. someone back when you hit a deep lob, someone in on drop shots & short angles.

Prior to January 1, if you were able to return the ball, a let would be played (if you had been aced, or a winner was hit by your opponent, you would concede the point).

The justification for such a change is simplicity, i.e. no debate over whether the ball could be returned or not, was the return a sitter, etc... Being more clear-cut, the thinking goes, leaves less room for unsavory folks to manipulate the intent of the rule for their own personal gain.

The effect will more likely be less correcting of calls (which is cheating), as an honest mistake by you or your partner is under the new rule punished, and thus you are provided with further incentive not to change the call. The emphasis in most sports officiating these days is the "get the call right." We see this with instant replay, "shot spot" and overruling by the chair umpire. This rule, however, moves us towards keeping the call wrong for all but the most moral of people, and puts tremendous pressure on a partner not to overrule their blind, dishonest or mistaken partner's clearly errant call.

So with this new rule, cheating is risen to a new level, for not only is there now the temptation to take a point that isn't yours, but also the temptation to not correct an accidental bad call by you or your partner because you will be punished for it. No good deed goes unpunished, as they say.

Perhaps in its wisdom, the USTA only seeks to find out who the truly honest people are. The ones that would sacrifice a point (maybe a big one), and perhaps suffer the wrath of their partner's scorn for the sake of fairness and honesty. We have created a double temptation: the temptation to cheat in the first place, and the temptation to not reveal an error in the second.

A second interpretation is that perhaps the USTA is hoping that we will take line calling more seriously, and be more sure of our call before we make it. We've all played with players who tend to call the ball before it bounces, so anxious are they to get to the result (in their favor, 99.9% of the time). Let us hope that this attentiveness to getting our line calls right is the outcome of the rule change.

League play has traditionally been a place of shrinking courts and fading lines. So much so, that I have heard people that habitually cheat referred to as "tough competitors," as if that was something to be admired. Of course these people are actually possess very weak competitive skills, because they trying to minimize the risk of losing by cheating, rather than have the competitive and moral strength to deal with the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." And maybe even lose, heaven forbid.

Perhaps the single most important skill in unofficiated competitive tennis is the ability to deal with unsavory characters on either side of the net. Of course you need much more than this to be successful, or have a good time, but fail in this, and you are done. Wow, that is a stunning statement, and quite an indictment of the current state of our game.

This rule change on overrules will only continue the trend to encourage low moral standards, and puts tremendous pressure on the honest people out there. Maybe we should be making it easier to be honest, not harder. Let's remember, the number one reason why people don't play league tennis is despicable or unpleasant behavior by the other people participating in those leagues. Do we really want to be driving the nice, honest people off the courts? We could label them weak competitors, but come now, is cheating and dealing with cheating the baseline for participation? That is sad.

But in the end, I encourage all players to be honest. If a mistake is made, bite the bullet and admit it. If it means loosing a point, even a big one, or the approval of a partner, at least we know that our morality is worth more than one lousy point in a local, small-town tennis match. And if we give into temptation, fall short of our own standards, we can always make amends the next time the ball lands close to the line. For all people fail at times, but not all people are failures. Let's bring sportsmanship back to tennis.

A Few Suggestions

Books

From time to time we pass along a few titles that have either really impressed us, or have been enjoyable reads. Since today is a dark and rainy day, it reminds me of curling up in front of the fireplace & reading. Here are a couple to try: ***The Talent Code*** by Daniel Coyle. Why do so many of the world's best soccer players come

Quote of the Month:

"Every great and commanding moment in the annals of the world is a triumph of some enthusiasm."
-- Ralph Waldo Emerson



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from Brazil? Or tennis players from a single court in Russia? What does it take to be really good? What motivates some players to great success, while others don't take off? I'll give you a little hint, hard work. But only the proper kind of hard work pays off. In a technical sport like tennis, get technical. Learn the proper movement patterns and practice them a lot. But not all at once. The talent code is a mystery explained, and quite a tale of learning how to create excellence. This amazing book can help each of us to be better players, teachers, parents and grandparents by understanding what creates greatness. It has already impacted my teaching and playing.

Stumbling on Happiness by Daniel Gilbert. I'm sure I've recommended this before, but this book has so influenced my teaching, especially strategy and mid-match adjustments for it explains the way we think, and draw conclusions, often incorrectly by the way the human brain is wired. And this book is a very funny read. Gilbert has quite a sense of humor. His acknowledgments at the beginning of the book are a classic.

A Very Private Gentleman by Martin Booth. This novel was turned into the George Clooney movie titled *The American* last summer. While the movie was good, the book is a brilliant study of the narrator's view of life, morality, and the rationalization of the things we do. Which can be quite interesting when your job is supplying high-profile assassins with weapons. The point of view, and paranoia of the narrator Mr. Butterfly couldn't be replicated in the movie format, and so much of the treasure of the story was lost. Here we have the power of first-person narrative on display.

USTA Leagues

The new USTA ratings came out in December, and USTA has published how much movement there has been between levels on their website. I think it is interesting to see where most players fall out.

2011 NORCAL LEVEL CHANGES

<u>Level</u>	<u># of players</u>	<u>Up</u>	<u>Unchanged</u>	<u>Down</u>
2.5	886	669	217	0
3.0	3288	1214	2062	12
3.5	8107	1361	6688	58
4.0	7201	570	6477	154
4.5	2051	110	1833	108
5.0	309	11	271	27
5.5	57	2	31	24
6.0	1	0	0	1

A few years ago there were far too many 3.5s, and the top and bottom of that division were very different levels. That has changed now, as many were moved up into 4.0 last year. Now 4.0 seems a bit top heavy, with the top players there looking much more like 4.5s than the 4.0s. There is always a bit of that in each division, but I think USTA is working to even things out as best as possible. As you can see from the chart above, while it is wonderful to get better, you do get to the point where there are less people to play.

We currently have a couple of USTA Mixed League Teams (6.0 and 8.0) and registration has begun for the USTA Adult Season (women's 3.0, 3.5, 4.0). Good luck out there!

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