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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 Courts Around

"The Tennis Court Specialists", our court contractors, who re-color courts all over Northern California, were quick to point out that Orindawoods has the nicest courts they have seen. And in such a beautiful setting as well. Apparently most courts in NorCal have suffered from cracking recently, due to the deep freezes we have had the last couple winters. We have been largely crack free, by comparison. It must be due to all the warm players we have on the courts. Keep smiling, playing and moving your feet. We're doing a great job out there!

Speaking of Courts And Moving Your Feet

NO BLACK SOLED SHOES THAT MARK!!!!!!!!!!!!

Someone has already trashed court 3's brand new surface within three days of the beautiful new court being completed. So frustrating to spend all that money and then one inconsiderate person...

Yes it is the current style to have black (and colored) soles on tennis shoes, but these are still made out of dense rubber that does not mark. Running shoes with a waffle pattern sole are different, much softer, and leave marks on courts when you change direction. These are the shoes that are not allowed on our courts.

As a side note, probably filed under karma in the Big Picture, running shoes are designed for moving forward and backwards, not sideways like we move in tennis. There is virtually no support going sideways in a running shoe, so if you play tennis in a running shoe, there is a very good chance you will roll your ankle. Sprained ankles often involve tearing ligaments or breaking bones, and take months to recover from. Not really worth it.

So if you don't care about the courts, at least take care of yourself, and don't play in running shoes.

And Then There Were Lines

As you have no doubt noticed, we have junior (light blue) lines on courts 4&5. These lines are a big help with teaching our junior members and students the game (we bring the court down to an eight-year-olds' size). After playing a few minutes of adult-size tennis, I didn't even notice the blue lines at all. So it is a change, but a minor one, and actually, if you look back at last month's article on where to hit the ball, the light blue lines make a really great target area for wide serves! I guess we would call that a Silver Lining, to quote a recent movie.

Tennis Tip

Connection vs. Collision

In tennis we "hit the ball", but what do we really mean by that? Is "hit" really the best word to describe this interaction between our racquet and the ball. There is contact, but what is the nature of that contact? And more importantly, if there are different ways to contact the ball, which is the best?

The Equipment: Well, to answer these questions, lets look at what we

Fit and Hit for the Summer

Fit and Hit, our tennis exercise class featuring drills and TRX exercise with Anna Marie has a new schedule for the summer:

Monday	8:30-9:30 a.m.	\$15/person
Saturday	8-9 a.m.	\$15/person

Hope you can join us and get in shape!!!

Pool Rules

Summer is in full swing, and the pool has seen lots of splashing on warm days. If you are inclined to like to splash, please remember a few simple rules for your own safety:

- There is no life guard, so you swim at your own risk. It is a good idea not to swim alone.
- Children under the age of 14 must be accompanied by an adult, no matter how well they swim
- No running on the pool deck
- No diving
- No glass in the pool area (glass is invisible in water, so very dangerous)
- No pets in the pool area (we love animals, but not in the pool)
- Poolside BBQs: We have Webber BBQs available for member use at all times. The gas grill is for special occasions, club events and parties. Talk to us for more info if you have an event.

Junior Program a Big Hit

The Orindawoods Summer Junior program has been really popular so far this summer. After the first day, 3 of the 8 sessions were already full, and the others were filling up fast. If you want to join in the fun, be sure to sign up right away!

We are clearly headed towards a sold out summer, a great achievement for Head Pro Patric Hermanson, Anna Marie, and the whole staff, not to mention Orindawoods. Orindawoods is certainly known in the community as a great place to learn tennis. We really stress learning here, as opposed to daycare, and we are certainly reaping the benefits of that. It is great to see so many young people so excited about learning the game we love.

are working with. The most obvious way to look at our equipment is that we are playing with a very bouncy rubber tennis ball that is pressurized with air. A tennis ball bounces much more than a baseball, for example. And our racquet is a trampoline. The ball bounces much more off our racquet than if hit with a solid wood paddle, or off the ground, for example. So hitting a tennis ball can be seen as a situation that lends itself to a lot of bouncing, or rebounding. When the racquet collides with the ball, there is a big bounce, a lot of power, and not really very much control. The only thing bringing the ball down is gravity and a small amount of air resistance (more on some windy Orindawoods afternoons, depending which way you are facing). This is the way most people look at hitting a tennis ball. As we discussed a few months ago, some try to control this type of interaction by going slow, or pushing the ball. While this helps a little, it really isn't a viable solution when faced with someone who can play well.

A Different Path: Again, the vast majority of people playing tennis look at the interaction of the ball and the racquet as a collision. But if we look a bit closer, there is a different type of contact that is possible. Notice that the ball is covered in felt. This outer layer is soft, it actually looks a bit like one half of the Velcro system. Perhaps that is somewhat obvious, but realize that the felt is there to give the ball much more than just some extra weight so the rubber ball doesn't fly as far. The less obvious characteristic of our equipment is the string bed of the racquet. Look closely, the strings are weaved together, causing rises and falls in the height of the string. In other words, the strings stick out like Velcro, but the sticky side. If we can get the raised parts of the string bed to dig into the soft felt of the ball, we can get grip, or hold on the ball, and we can use this connection to turn the ball and give it spin. Spin of course affects the flight of the ball, with topspin making the ball drop faster, and underspin helping it to hang in the air longer. Spin is essential to controlling the flight of the ball and thus playing really good tennis.

The Task At Hand: The trouble is, both of these ways of looking at the ball and the racquet are true. Playing tennis well involves trying to minimize the bounce/collision aspects of the interaction, and accentuate the connection/spin aspects. Not an easy task, especially when the ball comes at you with a considerable amount of speed.

Off From the Start: To start with, the whole way we learn to play is misguided at best, and most likely harmful to our ultimate success. The idea that we want to hit the ball, or line the racquet up so that ball hits directly on the stings and we hit "through the ball" is not helpful to getting to where the best players of the game arrive. In order to grip the ball in the connection/Velcro method, the last thing we want is a ball traveling at high speed plowing into a racquet moving in an equally high speed in the opposite direction. This collision will result in exactly the large bounce that is so difficult to control, and we don't want. As a side note, if you think about it, it is actually much easier to hit a ball over the fence, than in the court, given this set of physics.

Connection, Not Collision: In order to connect with the ball (get the Velcro to "stick" together, even for a brief moment), I need to come at the ball in a way that blends with its flight. I need to absorb some of the incoming energy of the ball, grip that ball with the raised elements of the strings, and turn that ball as it leaves the strings (there is always going to be some rebound or bounce, just how much, is the important issue in controlling the ball with skill).

I don't want a head-on collision, but instead, a brushing of the ball. That means the racquet is mostly glancing the felt of the ball and trying to avoid direct contact with the rubber core (I don't want to feel like I'm going "through" the ball). The strings blend with the felt, rather than collide with the springy rubber core. This can be quite difficult to arrange if the ball is approaching fast. In order to do this, I need to think about turning the edges of the racquet, a rolling motion that spins the ball, rather than lining the face of the stings up for a direct hit.

You Can Do It: How to do this interaction would be very difficult to describe here in words (visual and kinesthetic instruction is much better for this out on the court), but trust me, this is what the best tennis players are doing. And you can learn it, and we can teach it. The top players are avoiding collisions, and creating connection with the ball.

In the End: The highly accomplished stroke is based on rhythm, and a blending, catching and then sending of the ball, rather than bouncing the ball off a trampoline and praying for a successful landing. The best stroke is a combination of grabbing, pushing and turning. We're not hitting the ball the way most of us envision hitting, which is the racquet colliding with a ball. This is not to say that this blending or connecting with the ball is a slow motion. At the highest levels (hello Rafa), it has many of the characteristics of a whip (which is first slow, then incredibly fast), but contact is always a connection and turn, and not a direct collision. Good luck out there! Ole!

Tennis Tip

Being Appropriate

A ball comes over the net towards you. Offense or defense? Should I stay or should I go (poach or not)? Come in, stay back? Return a lob with an overhead or lob it back? These are questions thoughtful players ask themselves all the time, because in tennis, the situation

Quote of the Month:

"What I'm saying is I got it," [Ben said], "It's in my head."

Yeah, but Chon knows it goes out of your head the second the action starts and the adrenaline kicks in. Then it's all muscle memory that comes from repetition, repetition, repetition. – Don Winslow, *Savages*



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is constantly changing.

One of the traits of a truly skilled and accomplished player is to adjust to this ever-changing terrain of competition. I often liken it to the situation I face in skiing. You have to be in tune with the mountain, and the changing conditions. A skier who does not adjust to the mountain is one that is not upright very long. Perhaps the consequences are not as dramatic in tennis, but this is how the errors start to pile up and we lose.

Common Error: One of the common mistakes I see in match play is that players try to impose their will on a point, rather than adjust and flow with the actual situation. It is common for Player A to be running Player B all over the place, with Player A hitting good offense shot after good shot, only to have Player B, through skill or luck, actually return a pretty strong shot. At that point, a less skilled Player A will try to keep the pressure on by trying to hit an offensive shot, when actually, a more neutral or even defensive shot is required. Invariably, Player A misses, trying to force the issue, and Player B wins a point that anyone watching would say he had no right to win. But that isn't actually true. What needs to happen is that Player A needs to forget all that has gone before, and restart the point with a more neutral or even defensive shot, if that is required. This is hard to do, as all your previous work and good shots seem wasted, but we must accept, that the situation has changed, and we must change with it if we are going to thrive in tennis combat. In a sense, we need to manage our emotional investment in a point, stop keeping score while the point is still on going (who is winning this point, who is losing it?), and just tune into reality, and the art of the possible.

A Drill: Here is a drill that is very helpful with developing this skill. Get a practice partner, or even a foursome, and rally (or play points). Evaluate each shot that comes to you as a 1) positive situation, 2) neutral situation, or 3) negative situation. If it is a positive situation, you should keep the pressure on by hitting an offensive shot (this is not necessarily a hard shot, by the way. We have four weapons at our disposal: time, spin, placement and deception. Use one or more of them). The goal is to stay in a positive situation, and keep your opponent in a negative one. If the situation is neutral, say you are trading cross-court groundstrokes and no one has an advantage, then the goal would be to maintain that, and not get into a weaker situation. You are waiting for your opponent to hit a weaker shot, where you could move to offense, or maybe they hit a stronger shot, where you will have to switch to defending. Lots of players get bored in this kind of exchange, and try to do something offensive when it really doesn't make sense. In an effort to improve the situation to offense, they often miss or make the situation worse and end up in defense. Finally, if you are in a negative situation, remember the point is often far from over, or lost. Get the ball back in, and put pressure on your opponent to continue to make successful offensive shots. Many opponents choke when they get the upper hand, because they are wrongly thinking "I've got this sucker won" and they don't finish the job calmly and coolly by just hitting good shots.

An Example: Singles. One way to look at singles strategy is a system I call "The box." See Fig A. If the ball lands in the box on your side, this is a ball that usually you can direct, stroke well, and thus, you are in a positive situation. When you are in a positive situation, you avoid hitting the ball in the box on their side of the net. When your opponent hits a really good shot (outside of the box on your side), and you are running way off the court, you want to just get the ball back (negative situation), and you should aim for the easiest target to hit, the box on their side. The neutral situation is the shot that is in-between those two extremes. Maybe a ball that bounces on the edge of your box, or just outside. You are well in control of your movement and balance, but not enough to hit a real zinger (positive situation). Balls that land in the box are balls you have options as to where and how you can hit them (positive situation). Balls outside the box are where your makeable choices are more limited (negative or neutral situation). The more negative, the safer the wise player plays the shot (i.e. in the box). A common faulty thought is if I play it safe, I'll lose the point (because you feel you are losing control of the point by being defensive). Not true. Other players have the opposite problem, when their opponent hits a weaker shot (the ball in their box), they play it too safe and don't play an offensive shot. They lose their opportunity to take charge, and the opponent recovers to win some of the points. Hitting the appropriate shot is how you win

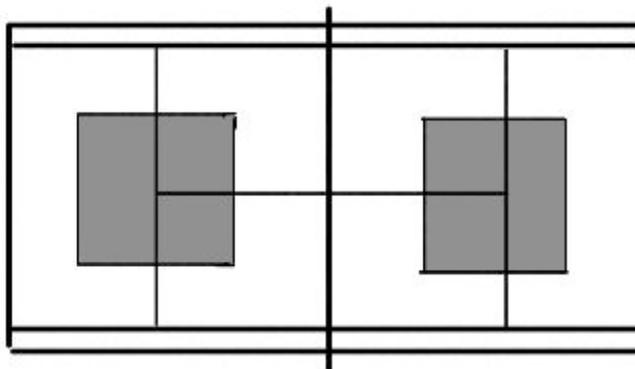
the greatest possible points. Too aggressive or too shy, both cost you points, games and matches.

An example: doubles. Here is a situation that comes up in doubles all the time: the alley is open, should I go for it? If I make it, 95% of the time, that shot is a winner (and I am a hero – and I have embarrassed my opponent). The trouble is, the alley is only open if it is a shot you can make. Just because there is space there, doesn't mean you have the skill or the situation (the way the ball comes to you and your alignment to the ball) to hit it there successfully. The obvious rule of thumb (which is broken all the time, by the way) is: only hit shots you can make. There is more than just geometry (straight path to the target). involved here. Physics and physiology (the way your body works to produce a stroke in this case) are just as important, if not more so.

In the ad court, the server may hit a hard serve out wide to a righthander's backhand, and your opponent may leave the alley open, but there are only a few players in the world (named Djokovic) who can make that shot consistently, especially under pressure. So that would be a neutral, at best, or even a negative situation (even though the alley is open) and you should simply return cross-court. If it the server hit a much slower shot, and you had the skill to go down the line, then you might find yourself in a positive situation, and you could go for that alley shot. Of course, given a weak serve, your opponent net person may cover the alley, sensing your ability to make the shot. Shot selection requires that you really know yourself, your game, and have an honest appraisal of your skills. And as I mentioned above, all this changes with pressure.

Be appropriate: So be appropriate to the situation. And the situation is always changing, so stay flexible, and not married to some idea of how the point is going to go. This is why you really should prepare for the ball well, and yet only decide what you are going to do at the last possible moment (about when the ball bounces when it is coming to you). Only then, will you have the most information possible as to what the situation is (positive, neutral, negative) and you can make the best decision, given the circumstances presented to you. Be wise and good luck out there!

Fig. A



OWTC Summer Junior Tennis Program 6/10-8/1:

Welcome to the 2013 Orindawoods Summer Junior Tennis Program. Below is listed our weekly schedule and pricing. For more information, contact Head Pro Patric Hermanson (patrictennis@yahoo.com).

Orindawoods Clinics	Ages	Days	Time	Cost/week Member/Non-member
Full Clinic				
Afternoon Clinic	ages 7-16	Monday-Thursday	12noon-3:45pm	\$185 / \$210
Half Clinic				
Instruction block	ages 7-16	Monday-Thursday	12noon-2pm	\$120 / \$135
Match Play Block	ages 7-16	Monday-Thursday	2:15-3:45pm	\$95 / \$110
Lil' Ones Clinic	ages 4-6	Tuesday & Thursday	4:00-4:45pm	\$35 / \$40
Clinic Schedule:				
Session 1	June 10-13		Session 5	July 8-11
Session 2	June 17-20		Session 6	July 15-18
Session 3	June 24-27		Session 7	July 22-25
Session 4	July 1-3*		Session 8	July 29-Aug 1

* No class on Thursday July 4th to celebrate our Nation's B-day. We'll pro rate the price that week.