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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

USPTA NorCal Convention

Your pros, Keith, Patric and Anna Marie all attended the USPTA NorCal Convention at Stanford University February 11-13. There were many great speakers. Topics covered included the return of serve, modern strokes, doubles, strategy/mental game, biomechanics the value of hitting for depth and much, much more. We look forward to sharing the new information in upcoming lessons and newsletters.

Tennis Tip

Three Types of Movement

There are three basic types of movement in tennis. One of them comes very naturally; the other two take a lot of focus and work. All three are important, and really, how well you move will largely determine how well you play. To be a good player, you have to have all three. Two out of three isn't going to work, and one out of three is going to lead to a lot of frustration, no matter how hard you try.

Let's start easy, and work our way into great play from there. We all know the rules of tennis. Don't let the ball bounce twice. We see a ball and we run after it to get there before it bounces twice or gets past us and bounces a second time behind us. This is the natural movement. See the ball and run over and hit it. Some of us have more or less physical ability than others, but we all do this. And it is essential. If we don't move to the ball, we can't begin to play.

Even "lazy" players usually run to the ball. This is not where lazy kills you. It is in the second type of movement that the breakdowns start to occur. The second type of movement is adjusting or aligning to the ball. It is amazing how many people either don't do this, or do it poorly. If you just run to the ball, you can hit it. How well, and how accurately mostly has to do with your alignment. If running to the ball involves the large, fast steps, aligning to the ball is the small, quick steps to put the ball in just the right place to make good contact.

So now you've run to the ball, aligned properly and hit a great shot, and you are still not done yet. This is another area where "lazy" can creep in, or at least distracted. The last movement is to reposition yourself for your opponent's potential reply (instead you're standing there looking to see if your shot went in, or how good it was). I often tell students that they have not finished the shot they are on until they are ready for the next one. That means both getting back on balance, and moving to where the ball is most likely to be returned.

One of the worst thoughts to have in tennis is, "I could have got that." It implies that if I just had a bit more focus, and did the stuff that didn't come naturally, I might have been able to win the point I just lost. In sales terms, it is called leaving "money" on the table. In other words, you're giving away points that you don't have to lose, just because you're not doing everything within your power to do.

When we are younger, we can get away with poorer positioning, because we are faster, and can make up some ground to get to balls. As we get older, positioning becomes more and more important. We've all had the experience of playing someone who couldn't even move, yet beats us like a drum. They just stood waiting, wherever we hit the ball.

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!

Spring Junior Clinics

Our Spring Junior program starts March 14. We have a great bunch of kids out there learning the game of tennis. Space is 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.

Leagues

Well, we've got four ladies league teams registered for the upcoming Adult USTA season. We will be fielding teams at 3.0, 3.5, 4.0 and 4.5. Good luck to all! The action starts in early April. If for some reason we have missed you, and you are interested in playing on one of these teams, please contact us and we will put you in contact with the appropriate captain.

Indian Wells Weekend

We are getting ready for the big Indian Wells weekend. We have over 40 people heading down to enjoy the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells. If you have ordered tickets, you can pick up your tickets from Keith. If you missed out on ordering this year, join us in 2012.

Then they would hit it wherever we weren't. This is when we walk off the court, head hanging down, and someone asks us how we did, and we reply, "I got schooled out there."

If you play and you feel like you are just running after the ball all day long, there is a good chance that you are not positioning very well, and that because you are having to scramble so much, you probably are not able to do the adjustment / alignment steps very well either. And you are losing. One of my strongest players put it this way. "I'm not a dog. I don't fetch."

A little bit better positioning, leads to a little less running. Instead of taking that extra time to stand around, you use it to align to the ball better. Now your shots are stronger, more penetrating, and your opponent is having a harder time getting to the ball and lining their shots up. That means they can't run you as well, and are hitting the ball more back to where it is most likely to go. Which is where you are standing after every shot. Suddenly, with a bit more discipline, a match that started out 1-6, has swung in your favor 6-4, and your opponent is getting tired and frustrated, as you cruise to 6-2 in the third. Your game didn't really change; you just started doing all three parts of the movement more often. Well done! Isn't winning fun (see below how important high energy and fun is)?

Lots of Tennis: Good, Bad or What You Make of It?

There are a lot of opportunities to play tennis these days. There are several different types of leagues (USTA, Spring, BALL, mixed, adult, flex, Walnut Creek Doubles, Walnut Creek Singles, etc), plus our social games, lessons, etc... People play on multiple levels of teams (4.0, 4.5), some people play in different areas too (Diablo North, Diablo South). Players could be on four USTA teams at one time. All good, right? The more the merrier.

I went to a meeting recently where the USTA representative was bragging about how there were leagues all year round now, and you could always be playing. Sitting next to me was one of the best players in Northern California, a guy who has played at the top level of the game for over sixty years. He now plays in the 70s division. He raised his hand and said, "I think that is one of the worst ideas I've ever heard. When are you going to recover? When are you going to work on new stuff and improve your game?"

Recently I've seen several really good players here at the Club come down with injuries. These are people who have good technique and are suffering from repetitive stress type of injuries. Tennis elbow, sore shoulders, etc... I know that as a teacher, even with good technique, when I teach too much, hit too many balls, I start to hurt. It is embarrassing for a tennis teacher to have tennis elbow, but really, it isn't from bad form as much as just way too much mileage in between tune ups (rest).

So who's right here? Play all you can, or having an off-season? How much tennis is too much? How much is too little?

One thing is for certain, more now than ever, the responsibility for how much you play falls squarely on your shoulders. If you are one of the stars of your level or social group, you are going to get asked to play way more than you should play.

So how much? Tennis is for fun, it is our recreation. Are you having fun? Start with that. If the answer is not very often, time for a break. Almost all my really bad experiences on the court (and in forty years, I've had a few) were when I didn't want to be there.

Jim Loehr, the sports psychologist made a chart many years ago that really tracks where you are in the two most important categories of performance. Your level of energy, and whether that energy is positive or negative. (See Fig. A on p. 3). This chart is divided into four quadrants. High positive energy (I), high negative energy (II), low positive energy (III), low negative energy (IV). You can track where you are at any given point of time during your game or match. When your energy is high, and you are feeling positive, you feel joyous, the game is fun, and you are very likely to play very, very well (I). On the other hand, if you are angry, or frustrated, or very nervous, you may have high energy, but it is negative in nature, and your performance will be very up and down (II). Brilliant and then out of control. But at least you have some energy, so there is some chance of success. However, too many angry days does wear you down after awhile. Low positive energy is when it is pleasant to be on the court, but you're not really moving that well, and win or lose, no big deal. Your focus isn't very good. "Look at the beautiful clouds." In terms of movement (see above), you are not going to do the little things to make you good. You are never really going to play very well in this quadrant, but then, who cares. "It is such a nice day." (that's life in III). Low negative energy is the one to watch out for. You're bored, you would rather be somewhere else, you don't even want to be playing (that could spike into high negative energy). Perhaps you are simply tired and just worn out. Of course you will play poorly in low negative energy (IV).

We all have days when we just aren't there (III or IV). But they shouldn't happen that often. Ideally, you would arrange your tennis calendar so that you were fired up each and every time you go out there (I). Our rule with teaching kids, for example, is give them a lot, but

Quote of the Month:

"Everybody talks about the weather,
but nobody does anything about it."
-- Mark Twain



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always a little bit less than they want. Keep them fired up about tennis, ready to come back, ready to have more fun.

Of course, as adults, we are on our own, and have to manage that for ourselves. Remember, that when you are saying yes to a game you don't want to play, you are damaging your chances of playing well at a time when normally you would really want to play well. Success is managing both our energy and our enthusiasm.

With all the types of competition available, it would be easy to play nothing but matches all the time, but this is not good for your tennis, or tennis enjoyment either. Even the most competitive person needs time to reenergize, work on their game, play fun, or practice matches, rest, get better. I recommend for every two times you play a match, you should have one practice session. That could be a lesson, or a hit with a friend or spouse, but don't just play matches if you want to have peak performances. Of course we can also practice too much, and not play enough matches. We need to put ourselves under pressure of match play, in order to be able to handle that pressure when we are playing a "really big match."

And who should you be playing to keep your interest up, and the fun element high (quadrant I below), and playing your best? To keep your confidence up, you should play some people that you can beat, that you could try some new things you have been working on against. To challenge yourself to new heights, you should play people better than you to make you improve. If you only play people you can beat, you won't get much better. If you only play people you can't beat, you won't get much better because your confidence will get pummeled. So we need a combination.

This is where an over emphasis on winning is bad, because we don't play anyone good (who challenge us to improve). But we don't want to bite off more than we can chew too often, because we don't get rewarded for what we are doing right. We might hit a great shot, the exact kind of shot that should be rewarded, but our opponent is so good they win the point anyway. We are getting the wrong kind of message there. So mix it up. If you are a solid 3.5 and win most of the time, play some 4.0 too. Keep it fun by winning, keep it fun by making it challenging. Both keep you in the high positive energy quadrant. Because if you win all the time, you'll end up in quadrant #3, just cruising along with little real commitment or improvement. And if you lose all the time, you'll end up in #4, and want to quit. We want to stay in #1. When challenges bounce us into #2, move back to #1.

It is a pretty simple question, but when you are playing, ask yourself if you really want to be there. Does your body feel energized? Hopefully the answer is yes. If it is "no" too often (we all have bad days), then think about reorganizing your tennis schedule and whom you are playing, so that when you are out there, you are enjoying the best game in the world! Don't just play a lot, play smart. Quality, not quantity, leads to fun, improvement and good health. Managing energy is the key.



