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Orindawoods Tennis News

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"I like this place, and willingly could waste my time in it – Celia, As You Like It, Act II, Scene IV

Rain

No, that is not a forecast, just a state of mind.

Admittedly, there has been a lot of rain this winter (bet you can't guess, it is raining as I write this). Of course this weather has played havoc with our league match schedule, as well as anyone just trying to get out and hit some balls. At times, match after match has been canceled. It is easy to think that all it does is rain, but there actually are clear days, and chances to play. So rain does become a state of mind, and we get so used to it raining, that we think it is going to rain all the time, which just isn't true. This dark attitude certainly happens to me as much as you. I feel like it has done nothing but rain, but when I look back on the past couple of weeks, I have taught about 70% of my lessons. Of course teaching 25% of my lessons the previous three weeks led to this attitude. Even then there was some tennis being played even then by the brave and courageous. Who knows what the rest of this El Nino year will provide, but keep your eyes open to those patches of blue (dry blue courts that is), and those times that we can still play. They are out there, if we don't succumb to the habit of thinking that all it does is rain.

USTA Adult League

The USTA adult league is about to start. We have several teams registered on the Women's side. We have 4.0, 3.5A and 3.5B. Leagues are fun and exciting to participate in. This year there has been quite a bit of action in just forming the teams and getting organized before the season even starts. I think we have ended up with some good teams and opportunities to play. Please remember that this is tennis, we do this for fun in our recreational time, and go out there and have a blast playing the game you love. Best of luck to all the players on our league teams!

BALL and Spring Leagues

If you look at the Club Calendar (on www.orindawoodstennis.com) you might think that we are in about forty leagues, there are so many matches. In actuality, many of the matches listed are make-ups of make-ups of matches that were scheduled before and rained out. It has been a tough year for getting through the schedule, but thanks to all the players for participating, as well as the captains for constantly having to find new dates to play. We have been able to still limit these matches in almost every case to Mondays and Fridays. We really don't want to block

Ball Machine Club

For those of you who like to practice on the ball machine, it is time to renew or sign up for your yearly Ball Machine Club membership. Once again, the price is \$100 for the year for unlimited ball machine use (provided the machine is not in use and within the hours allowed). Ball Machine Club members have a key to the shed so that they can get the machine out during off hours. The membership runs from March 1 to February 28, 2011. The ball machine can be used before 8:30 in the morning, and after 10:30 (after 12 noon on weekends). There is no ball machine use on lighted courts. The ball machine is a great way to groove your strokes and improve your game.

Indian Wells Trip

This month over thirty members are heading south for the winter to escape the winter weather patterns and watch a bit of tennis down in Indian Wells. Yes, it is that time of year for the men's and women's pro tour to visit sunny California and put on quite a show at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden.

If you are lucky enough to be going this year, here are a couple of ideas to watch for. 1) The practice courts are great places to see the top stars. Often these players play on just the stadium court, where you can't get very close. But on the practice courts, you can stand right next to them. This is also a great place to see how the top pros prepare, what their coaches do and say to them, as well as really close viewing of their technique. 2) Courts 2 & 3 as well as the smaller stadiums are great places to watch matches up close. If you look at the line-up for the day published each morning, you can then go camp out on your favorite court. Get there early, and you could easily end up in the front row. 3) Part of the fun of Indian Wells is the great restaurants in the area. Personal favorites of our members are The Cliff House, Castelli's, & L&G's Steakhouse, but there are so many more. 4) The food is good at the tournament too, with Johnny's burgers tasting so good.

off courts for league play on any other weekdays so that we can all enjoy our private games on those non-league days.

Tennis Tip

The Mental Game Empowerment

In the words of player, coach and sports psychologist Allen Fox, "we only want to think thoughts that help us." Simple, but oh so difficult to do. Can you, for an entire match, only think thoughts that help you? What about after you miss an easy sitter, on game point. Still positive? Not many players are.

At a doubles clinic recently someone argued that players should come to the net because it puts pressure on their opponents. I've heard this my whole life (and I have come to the net a lot over the years because I believed it). But let's look at this statement. Who does it empower? You are coming in, you think you are being offensive by scaring your opponent. But what if they are not scared?

About 1988, I should have figured out there was something really wrong with this reasoning. In one of the first interviews I ever heard with Andre Agassi, he said that he liked it when players came in on him, because it gave him a target, a place to aim. Not only did Andre not seem scared, he loved it when players came in. Loved it. Played better. Won more.

So if you come into the net because you are in a better position to play well, that is empowering. If you are coming in to scare them, you're bluffing. They may call your bluff. If you are playing a strategy that puts you in the strongest position possible (this may or may not involve coming in), then you will play well and they have to play well to beat you. Empower yourself, that is the most intimidating strategy.

Tennis Tip

All Things Volley

Technique / How to Hit: There are basically four types of volleys. Drop, block, pop and swing. In other words, you can take speed off the ball, you can block the ball back, you can increase the speed, and you can hit a swing volley. For the first three, you can prepare and look almost exactly the same, and yet produce radically different results. The fourth option, the swing volley, is a different critter all together (looking much more like a groundstroke than a volley).

For volleys, it is important to stay very light on your feet. The key is to move your feet quite a bit, and keep your hands as still as possible. Remember, the ball is often coming very fast, and if you move the racquet very much, it is going to be very hard to connect with the ball, let alone, aim. So while it is common to think that great volleyers have "quick hands," they actually have quick feet and slow hands.

A good ready position, with your weight on your toes and your hands in front of your chest is essential. One of the crucial mistakes is to stand with your arms by your sides, rather than raised and up in front of you. The clue I look for is that the player's elbows have to be in front of their trunk, or they are going to have a lot of problems. You should hold the racquet softly, with a light touch, as we are most coordinated at about 20-30% of our strength.

Once you see the ball coming, make a unit turn. That is, your body and arms turn as a unit. Your arms don't reach towards the ball. Again, remember, you don't want your hands/arms moving around, you want your feet moving your whole body (unit) around. Keep the hands steady, move your feet.

So now you have lined the ball up so that it is going to hit your strings. You have three choices, take

speed off the ball, send it back the way it came, or add speed. How you do that without moving the racquet much (and out of the way of the ball), is what distinguishes good volleyers from flailers. Accomplishing this is actually quite easy. What you want to concentrate on is your fingers, or your grip on the racquet.

1. To take speed off the ball, you want to hold the racquet very soft before the ball gets to you, and as it hits the racquet (soft, soft). The ball

Quote of the Month:

*To journey without being changed
is to be a nomad
To change without journeying
is to be a chameleon.
To journey and to be transformed
by the journey
Is to be a pilgrim
-- Mark Nepo*

will hit the racquet, and a lot of the energy of the incoming shot will cause the racquet to bounce backwards. The ball will still bounce forward, but most of the resistance of the racquet is gone, so the ball won't go very far. The perfect drop shot.

2. To block the ball back the way it came, squeeze the grip tighter both before the ball hits the racquet, and while the ball is making contact. (squeeze, squeeze). The ball will rebound back off the racquet much like it does when it hits the ground or a solid object (in truth, it is losing some speed, but it has enough left to go deep in the court).
3. To add speed to your shot, hold the racquet soft and then squeeze right as the ball arrives. (soft, squeeze). This causes the head to snap forward a couple of inches right as the ball arrives, adding pace to the shot.

Drills: Here is a simple drill to practice these skills. You can do this with a hitting partner, your teacher, or a ball machine. Have the person hitting to you stand at about $\frac{3}{4}$ court, or about 10 feet inside the baseline. When they hit a ball to you and you take pace off the shot (soft, soft), your return shot should bounce twice before it gets back to them. If you block the shot, it should bounce once, and if you pop the shot, it should make the flight to them without bouncing. Sounds easy. Give it a try. Focus on what you do with your fingers, and make sure you don't swing the racquet (no followthrough).

The Swing Volley: This is the new kid on the block in tennis. In order to have time to swing at the ball, the ball needs to be going much slower (like before a groundstroke after the ball bounces). Swing volleys are usually done when you are in the back part of the court (behind the service line), but want to take the ball out of the air. If you have good groundstrokes, you can swing volley. It will take very little time to learn, because you take the same basic swing. Positioning is key (like on any shot in tennis), because you must take a good stroke that has you both making contact and aiming towards the court. You can't wave at the ball hoping something good will happen.

How You Are Going to Win the Point: As we approach the game of tennis, it is important to understand how to win the point, the game or the match. What can work, and what doesn't really have much of a chance. With volleys, generally placement is the most important weapon (of the four weapons: speed/time, placement, spin, deception). We have a strong position at the net, and if we can just direct the ball to where our opponent can't get it, we will win. Different types of volleys are going to allow you to place the ball in different parts of the court.

When you angle a ball off, generally you don't have as much length of courts as when you hit the ball straight ahead. This means that angle shots often will have to employ the soft/soft technique to take speed off the ball. If we get close enough to the net, we can sometimes employ blocking or even popping the ball, but this is unusual. We generally hit angle shots when our opponent has hit the ball out to the side. For example, in doubles, when your opponent tries to hit down your alley, and you get to it, this is a great time to angle.

Shots that come to us down the middle are much harder to angle because we don't have very much room in which to take the speed off the shot and keep it in before the ball goes over the sideline and thus out. In singles, we can still drop shot these middle balls (soft/soft), but in doubles, that probably won't work. These middle shots are often best returned by hitting back up the middle with either a block (squeeze/squeeze) or a pop (soft/squeeze) if the ball is going slow enough. Generally, it is much tougher to produce winners from out of the center in doubles (that is why it is the best place to hit), and so it becomes very important to be able to volley well from the center by either blocking or popping. Players who try to win middle points by generating force by swinging or angling tend to lose a lot because they make too many mistakes on points where they are actually in control.

Balls that float back into the backcourt tend to bounce way up in the air. Lobs fit this bill, for sure, but also high, deep ground strokes. If we let these balls bounce, we often get pinned back by the fence, with little choice but to lob ourselves. If we try to hit these with a traditional volley, we don't get much on the ball and our resulting shot can be kind of a sitter for our opponent. The solution here is to neither let the ball bounce, nor block it. Instead, hit what looks like a ground stroke, but hit the ball out of the air before the ball bounces, the swing volley. This sounds difficult, but in my experience, if you can hit ground



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strokes well, this is one of the easiest shots to learn.

So now you have a plan. If you are in the backcourt, and you suspect they are going to hit a lob, you move in for the swing volley. If you are at the net, and you get a ball out by the alley, you angle (soft/soft most of the time). If you get a ball down the middle, you hit back down the middle with a block or a pop. Tennis, and volleying in particular, is much more about execution than strategy or trickery. I've known since about 1973 where to hit the vast majority of the shots. Success or failure is much more about whether I can hit them or not. So OK, you are not very tricky, just good. And that is the best trick of all to throw at your opponent.

Of course, the other key to volleying is knowing which shots to volley, how, and when to employ net play as a strategy (see the mental game above). Good positioning at the net is the difference between being empowered and being vulnerable, but we will leave that tactical discussion for another time. For now, know when and how to be soft, or squeeze, or swing. Good luck out there!

Spring Junior Program

The 2010 Spring Junior Clinics begin the week of **March 15th**, and will continue thru the week of **May 31st**. Space is still available. The **Summer Program** will follow (starting June 14) and follow the same schedule. Program leaders for the 11-week session are Head Pro **Patric Hermanson** and 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.