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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

Monday Team Tennis

It is time for Monday Night Team Tennis! For those of you who have played before, that is all you need to know to sign up. For the rest of you, MTT is our social tennis league played all summer long on Monday evenings. We divide all those enrolled into several teams who play against each other every Monday night (sometimes there are byes).

Matches start each Monday evening at 6 p.m. and finish up around 9-9:30p.m.. We play men's and women's doubles, mixed doubles, and even mixed triples. Dinner is included (a couple times each summer your team will be asked to provide dinner – cost reimbursed). The cost for MTT is \$50 for the whole summer of tennis fun. (limited number of select non-members pay \$70).

If you would like to sign up, either write Keith, orindawoodstc@sbcglobal.net or go to the website, www.orindawoodstennis.com and click on "register for MTT" on the front page. We will be limiting the number of spaces this year so that more people get to play more often. If you want more information, or to see if you fit in, write me or talk to me at the club. Meet other members, play MTT!

Ace It! 2010

This year's Ace It! is scheduled for June 26, 2010 and we would like to invite you to participate again this year. This will be our ninth Ace It! event since we started in 2002. We have raised over \$100,000 in that time for the Carol Ann Read Breast Center at Alta Bates. For those of you who have participated over the years, thank you so much for your support. With your help, we have created a great community feeling of caring and support for our friends, family and neighbors in need. If you would like more information about Ace It!, see some pictures from past years, or sign up for 2010, please go to the OWTC website:www.orindawoodstennis.com and click on the link to Ace It! in the left column.

We will be using the same format for the event this year. A warm-up in the early morning followed by the Tour of Pros clinics, the luncheon on the deck, and then the Ace It! Tournament. As always, you can participate in either the morning, the afternoon, or both. The action starts at 8:30 a.m. and goes until 4 p.m. if you do the whole day. The incredible Ace It! Raffle is included in the price. Come join us for this celebration of life, community and support. We really hope to see you on June 26 for Ace It! 2010!

Old Friends

Time moves forward
A game of chess with Death
We play our lives as best we can
Often with no rest

Like the passing of the tide
Rolling in and rolling out
Many friends are lost to us
They came this way and went

We miss them when they leave us
Never wanted to say goodbye
Sadness brings the tears
I feel afraid to cry

For those who do remain
Alone to ponder future near
There is the joy of knowing
They spent their time here

In the past couple of years we have lost many people, men and women, who have been members here at Orindawoods for many years. Some of them members for over thirty years. Many members of the men's lunch bunch have passed, as well as others. Good friends, people we all care about.

When I came to Orindawoods fifteen years ago, I was amazed at how wonderful a club Orindawoods was. A place where people of all ages felt welcomed. That is still true today. So many people playing into their eighties. Tennis seemed like the fountain of youth. But eventually, life ends. But friendships last for all times, even when some friends are gone. We remember them all in our hearts.

Of course many of us remain, playing this game that we love. For health, fitness, enjoyment, a touch of frustration, a bit of self-growth, and the companionship of good friends. Let us all cherish the wonderful place and people that is Orindawoods.

Tennis Tip***Redefining the A Grade***

For those of us who grew up in the school system, that is, all of us, the definition of success became 90% early on. For some, it was even 95%. Applying that standard to tennis is not only foolish, but competitive suicide.

First of all, the leagues are set up to be competitive. In USTA, if you win too much, you are moved up. If you lose too much, you are moved down. Most people win between 40 and 60% of their matches. If you are playing at the proper level, a lot of matches will go three sets (or a close two sets).

In most matches, the winner wins more points than the loser, but often it is not that many more (and sometimes it isn't even more). In the 2009 Australian Open Final, the loser Federer, won more points than the winner, Nadal. In the 2010 Australian Open Final, the winner Federer, only won 16 more points (116 to 100, or 54%) than the loser, Murray, even though the match was not close (3 sets to none, games were only 19 to 13, however). Serena defeated Henin in the women's final winning 51% of the points (90 to 85)

I don't know what school you attended, but 51-54% was an F at my school. It seems to be an A in tennis.

Of course we are talking points won here. But if we look at shots made, we can see that of the 216 points played in the Men's final, 78 ended in unforced errors (36%). I doubt very much that either Federer or Murray in this case, made nine shots for every one that he missed. Only 75 of the 216 points (35%) ended in winners, the ultimate A.

Clearly success in tennis is defined much differently than in school. In school, we have to get almost every answer right, but in tennis, we are losing almost every other point. The ramifications of this for our confidence, and our ability to play our best, are huge.

A strategy that attempts to win every point will lead to failure. A strategy that aims to get you to 55% will more likely lead to success. Where you can aim for over 90% and an A is in on focusing (see below).

Even in school I learned that it is more important to know what is on the test, than to try to know all the information. When I started approaching the tests from the point of view of what questions will the teacher ask, I started doing a whole lot better with much less stress and late night hours studying.

In tennis, it is predictable where most of the balls will go, but it is often not predictable where the next ball will go. There in lies the rub.

Trying to guess where the next ball will go will lead to fear, uncertainty, over effort, over reaction, and/or paralysis. Standing where the next ball is most likely to go will lead to much higher success. Will you win the next point? Who knows? Will you win most of the points, very likely.

Eighty percent of the balls in doubles cross the net through the middle of the court. Seems like that would be a pretty good place to set up shop, but few do. Everyone is afraid the ball will go down the alley. And it does, just not enough for you to lose, unless you give in to uncertainty, and the desire to win 90% of the points. If 20% of the points don't go down the middle, and you lose those, you are down to a B- right there, even though no one wins 80% of the points in a tennis match. That would be 6-0, 6-0 with the loser only winning one point a game (48 points to 12). That almost never happens.

Now the 80% that go through the middle don't necessarily go over the middle low enough to where you can hit them standing up at the net, but they have to bounce in the court to be good. So it seems that the best formation would be someone covering most of the middle up at the net, and someone else standing

back to take care of the lobs and odd balls that get by. The I formation, which is what most top men's doubles teams are playing a great deal of these days. Of course most club doubles teams are trying to play side by side, which leaves no one directly in the middle, where most of the shots go. And the question of who takes that ball in the middle becomes a point of great confusion. As well as who gets the lob.

So how do you stay confident, when the outcome seems so much up in the air? You stick to what you

Quote of the Month:

"Though the Earth is touched by everything alive, it never stops turning around the fire at its center, and though we are touched by the stories of strangers and the far off songs of birds lost in the wind, we find our way by following the spirits' voice at our center. Too much is lost in waiting for someone else to tell us what moves us is real."

-- Mark Nepo

believe, even if it is wrong, in the short term. Believe in your plan. If you are evaluating the wisdom of your strategy on the outcome of every point, or even every match, you will go crazy, and you won't play very well either. And if your confidence hinges on the outcome of the previous point, tennis is going to seem more like torture than a fun game to play on a Saturday afternoon.

Taking this even one step farther, it is better to believe the shot is going through the middle and be ready for that, and be wrong, than to be more neutral and uncertain. Strangely, a body committed to action will act, and actually recover quite well for the unexpected, rather than a mind/body lost in uncertainty. Yes, it is better to be sure and wrong, than uncommitted and afraid. Keep making educated guesses, and committing to them. Good luck out there.

Tennis Tip:

Focus

*If you can keep your head
When all around are losing theirs
And blaming you*

Those lines from Rudyard Kipling's *If* ring so true on the tennis court. Of course we all have times when we "lose our head." If you were ever a male under the age of 35, then you probably lost your head for about 25 years (ages 10-35).

By losing your head, of course we don't mean just getting upset, throwing a temper tantrum, etc... What really happens much more often, much more subtly, and much more dangerously, is that we forget who we are, and what we are doing.

Tennis is dominated, even at the pro level, by unforced errors. That is, shots that are within our ability to make. Some of these errors come from not paying attention, others from being too ambitious, others from not being able to control our emotions (fear or excitement). Often two-thirds of the points in a match or more end in errors.

You don't see that many errors in rock climbing do you? Or among racecar drivers or extreme skiers. Basically, the more dangerous the sport, the better we pay attention. This is one reason why people get such a natural high from tasks that are difficult and dangerous. You feel so alive, because you are paying so close attention. Every moment has been lived to its fullest. Time even seems to slow down. Colors brighten, you can see everything clearly, hear every sound, even tell what is about to happen. Martial artists train for years to try to reach this place of high attention.

Even with recreational skiing, no one likes to fall. And you can get hurt. I pay much better attention skiing down a slope of moguls than I ever do hitting a tennis ball. And I make a lot less errors.

But this level of attention is possible in tennis too. And I am sure there are days when you have been there, and just can't miss. Jimmy Connors described returning serve in one of his greatest matches as everything looking in slow motion, and the ball looking the size of a grapefruit. And he was playing the best server in the game at the time. Heightened awareness and attention.

The problem with tennis is errors are just too common. And the consequence just isn't that great. You miss a shot, what's the big deal. Ball goes in the net. So what. No one died. Everyone is missing shots. You're going to lose about half the points in a match anyway (see above), so no big deal. Easy come, easy go. Now while this outlook may help you from going insane because of all the errors and your own imperfection, an unwelcomed side effect is that it also causes us to stop paying attention with your full capacity. And that is on days when you are not bored or distracted. Think how bad your attention can be on those days you don't want to be playing.

Tim Gallwey of the Inner Game of Tennis fame made an incredible statement once. It was this. "You will make errors. You never need to make another error." Both of these statements are true. We need to accept our errors as part of being human, but we also can concentrate in such a way that we will never miss another shot. Can we accept errors, and yet be fully present right now, as the next shot comes, or



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the next point is played. In other words, we need the information that the errors give us, so that we can make corrections, but we don't need the judgment and self-loathing that often accompany those errors. It serves no purpose or positive value. We often think it is motivational to get down on ourselves. Come on, get going! But in truth, it is just another distraction. Sometimes we want to do well so badly that we are just so disgusted with our inability to perform. While this may be an honest response, it is not helpful. Don't mistake trying too hard for focusing.

The key to the mental game, and life, is to only think thoughts that help you. But how often do we fail at that? And then, to make it worse, give ourselves a hard time for our failures.

Another problem is that there are a lot of tennis related things you can think about that are still not focusing on playing the next shot. What's the score? What did my pro say to do on the forehand (and then the ball comes to your backhand – how rude)? I wish my partner would make a volley sometime today. I'm letting my team down if I lose this match, etc...

Tennis, like life, is a process-oriented sport. Too much focus on the outcome can be the worst of distractions. As the outcome is only determined by the moment-to-moment process of playing. Outcomes can provide great motivation for success, but they have to lead to better focus and concentration. To stay in the process of playing. To be one with what you are doing. And not to have the effect of taking you out of that place. Sports psychologist Allen Fox asks the question, do you really want to win? He asks that, because if the answer is yes, then you must focus 100% of the time and thus stop worrying about winning. That's the paradox of the great competitor. Or as Nadal said so well, "I like to compete more than I like to win." You can see that when he walks on the court. There is someone who isn't going to lose very often. He is so focused on the battle, not the prize.

For me, this begs the question, when should I play tennis? Only when I really want to be there. In this day and age where league matches are scheduled months in advance, this level of attention can be pretty hard to manage. We do have a life, after all. And yet we choose to play. It kind of seems like if we are going to spend all this time, effort and money to participate in tennis, we ought to actually participate (this includes preparing: getting in the proper mood, eating, being hydrated, arriving on time, getting a warm up). And participate like it was rock climbing, like your life depended on it.

Billie Jean King, when once asked about why she zoned in a huge Wimbledon final, said that she got up that morning and just fully focused on every little thing she did, from her first thought through the entire match. Can we do that? Yes. Do we do that? Not too often. But the good news with focus is as soon as you become aware you have lost it, you can get it back. Or you can start condemning yourself for losing it. Or go right on being distracted. I imagine the great mental performers lose their concentration all the time. They just go back to focusing right away, and let all the other stuff just go.

Summer Junior Tennis Camps

This summer, we will run a full afternoon camp 12 noon to 3:45pm, with an instructional block from 12-2pm, a break from 2-2:15pm and a match play block from 2:15-3:45pm, Monday thru Thursday. Those looking for a shorter class can choose to enroll in only the instructional block or the match play block on any given week. A Lil' Ones class will be offered Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-4:45pm. The 2 hour instructional block at \$115, the 1.5 hour match play block at \$90 and the Lil' Ones at \$30. Those are weekly member prices. The full afternoon camp (12-3:45pm) will be priced at \$180. To get more information or sign up, contact Patric (see sidebar).