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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

Orindawoods Makeover

We have some big changes coming up at Orindawoods, some by design and some simply seasonal:

Orindawoods Goes Babolat

Tennis Director Keith Wheeler and Head Pro Patric Hermanson are happy to announce that we have a new deal with Babolat. We will be converting the Pro Shop to a Babolat shop starting in early November. We will be selling Babolat racquets, balls and strings. We are planning our grand Babolat opening for November 8th when the new Pro Shop remodel is scheduled to be completed (see below).

As you know, many of the top players in the world use Babolat racquets (Nadal, Roddick, Tsonga, Quarry, Janowicz, Stosur, Radwanska, Harrison, and many others) as well as many, many up and coming junior players. Babolat has been known for years as the "players" racquet. We are very happy and proud to bring Babolat to Orindawoods.

After almost thirty years with Prince, this is a big change for us. There have been many great frames from Prince over the years, but the numerous struggles and changes in ownership and direction the company has gone through over the last ten years makes this a good time to switch to a more stable product. If you are playing Prince, we will still be servicing Prince racquets, as well as all other brands.

Office Remodel

We will be remodeling the Pro Shop in early November. The shop/office hasn't seen a facelift since its inception, so it is high time, and over due. Unfortunately, this building process will leave us without an office for November 4-8, so if you see three wandering tennis pros walking around, they would be us.

This process will make it a bit harder for you to reach us during that week, but we'll still check e-mail and phone messages.

The week prior to November 4 (Oct. 28-Nov. 3) we will be doing a lot of moving (dumping stuff), and some painting, so we will have limited office capabilities that week as well. Bear with us for October 28-November 8. We will all be happy with the final product.

Lessons, junior clinics and other programs will soldier on as normal. It will be a welcomed relief to be out on the courts, so come join us!

The Darkness Descends on Orindawoods

Yes, it is getting darker in the evening, and daylight savings time is about to end (November 3). We grudgingly acknowledge such facts of the natural order, and prepare to hunker down for the cold, cruel, dark winter (of our discontent, made burdensome winter by this cruel setting sun).

And yes, it is true, we only have two lighted courts. A sad fact, but let me suggest that there is plenty of available lighted court time after 7:30 and later in the evening. It is the 5-7:30 time frame that is jammed up (and only M-Th). So if you are interested in playing just a bit later most nights there is a court for you. Be flexible, increase your playing time repertoire, and thrive under our beautiful, new, lighted courts.

One of the tough jobs of management is dividing up those lighted court

Court Reservations and Play Time:

Ninety Minutes: Please remember that play time is essentially 90 minutes. If you don't get bumped and want to play longer, great... but 90 minutes is the limit if people are waiting. That goes for both reserved and drop-in courts.

No Multiple Bumping: You get bumped, so then you go to another court you know has been playing 90 minutes and attempt bump them. This is not allowed. If they are lucky enough to be on a court that wasn't bumped after 90 minutes, that is their good fortune and not your opportunity.

The Art of the Bump: When someone has completed their 90 minutes and you have a reservation, respectfully approach their court, wait at the gate, and let them know that you have the court next. If they are playing a match, let them finish the game they are on (no ad scoring, please – no tie-breakers).

Be friendly. Please do not walk on their court, make a lot of noise, start stacking your equipment on the bench, etc... until they have completed their game. You wouldn't appreciate that behavior if it were you that was getting bumped.

No Back-to-Back Reservations: People from the same group can't make back-to-back reservations.

Designated Start Times: The red boxes on the court scheduler mean that you have to play that 90-minute block if you are using that court. You can't start early and overlap that time, or later and flow over that time. Designated Start Times help control the flow of traffic on the courts and create the maximum opportunity for the largest number of members to play.

Ball Machine Use: Remember that to use the ball machine, reserve court #3. A court #3 reservation includes ball machine use, but remember that you cannot make a ball machine reservation during prime time (M-F 9-10:30, and Sat/Sun 9-12noon, and evening court times). Put the machine away if no one has it reserved after you.

times. The Club's basic philosophy is, before 6 p.m., we tend to use the lighted courts for teaching. Then starting at 6, there are generally two reservation courts in 90 min. blocks for member play. Taking all of the member's needs into consideration, this is the system that works the best. Of course, whenever there are limited resources, adjustments must be made, and compromises struck. We feel the pain of such dark times.

The good news is that winter is short in these parts, and daylight savings time returns on March 9th. Even before that, there will be enough light to play until almost 6 p.m. as early as mid February. Hang in there!

Pool Closing

With the end of October comes the end of the pool season here at Orindawoods. The pool will close on October 31st (a dirty trick, not a treat). We plan to reopen on May 1, so huddle up in a warm blanket in front of the fire this winter, stay warm, and dream of the coming spring and warm days out by the pool again.

Holiday Schedule

The Pro Shop will be closed for the Thanksgiving weekend (Thursday 11/28 – Sunday 11/31). We will also be closed on Tuesday 12/24 and Wednesday 12/25, and Tuesday 12/31 and Wednesday 1/1. It seems terribly early to say this, but enjoy the holidays!

Tennis Tip:

Chasing Spin

The longer I play and teach, the more I am convinced that tennis is primarily about chasing spin. That is, making the ball spin. That should be our primary goal. This is another way of saying tennis is about control, not power.

This is contrasted with what most of us have been doing for years, which is trying to make the ball go forward. Of course we want the ball to go forward -- it has to go over to the other side of the court -- but it has to also clear the net and drop in. The dropping part is primarily where spin comes in. Without spin, the ball drops due to gravity. With spin, it also drops primarily because of gravity, but added aerodynamics cause it to drop faster (or slower, depending on what kind of spin you apply).

Directional Aiming: To get the ball to go towards the target, my racquet face (the strings) has to be on the backside of the ball, perpendicular to the desired flight path of the ball. But how you get your racquet to the backside of the ball makes all the difference. If you strike the ball on the back with a forward motion causing a direct hit (collision), the ball will bounce straight ahead, and have very little spin. If instead of going forward and hitting on the back of the ball, I rotate my arm so that the racquet face circles around behind the ball causing me to connect with it in a brushing motion (I'm basically rolling the ball, rather than colliding with it), then the ball will spin.

The Problem of Control: As we have discussed above, if my racquet goes forward, and makes a direct hit on the ball, I will have very little spin. The only thing that will bring this kind of contact down is gravity. In order to control the ball with this style, you will hit it softer, slower. That way gravity will have more pull on the ball and return it to earth. Any hard shot will have to cross very close to the net so that gravity will be able to pull it down in time before it crosses the end line. Of course this approach makes hitting the ball hard much more dangerous, and prone to errors.

If on the other hand, my racquet rotates to the back of the ball and I spin, or roll the ball, then the top spin will assist gravity in helping the ball return to the court before it goes long.

When a ball comes to us, it would be less advantageous to think of my racquet going forward to make the ball go forward, because that causes a direct contact (only gravity for control). The more useful approach would be to think about how to spin the ball, and get as much spin as possible on the ball, to assist gravity in the difficult task of keeping your shots in the court.

This is the problem with focusing on power (forward speed of the shot). Focusing on power is likely to lead to thinking about going forward. Looking at tennis as applying forward force to the back of the ball leads to errors.

It is more helpful to start with thinking about control through spin. This is where a pusher and a player diverge. Both think about control ("What the Pusher Gets, and Doesn't Get Right" -- May 13 newsletter), but the pusher thinks of moving the racquet forward, and must therefore go slow to keep the ball in. A more accomplished player will think about control, but go faster to spin the ball more (by circling the racquet around to the back side of the ball and brush it, rather than swing forward and collide with the ball).

What About Power? Hitting with spin does not preclude hitting with power, in fact, it actually makes it more possible to hit hard and keep it in. But the approach must be to produce spin as my primary goal. The faster your racquet moves to create spin, the more forward speed

Quote of the Month:

"The problem with the subconscious is that it is subconscious." -- Carl Jung



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more!*

will be produced as a byproduct (but not the goal or primary objective).

With bouncy, pressurized rubber balls, and a trampoline for a racquet, power is built into the game. If you are going to hit the ball hard, it is much easier to hit it over the fence than in the court. Spinning the ball isn't going to get rid of the power, just help control it by using aerodynamics. The ball is going to bounce off the strings, and go fast, the real question is not how much power you can produce, but can you control the power you've got? Good luck out there.

Tennis Tip:

Two Steps Faster

In a world where we all seem to be getting slower (unless, dear reader, you happen to be sweet sixteen and the world is your oyster), I can make you at least two steps faster on the tennis court.

Bold, rash statement, eh? And yet it is true. And not only that, but it doesn't require any intense training, or fancy new footwork drills. Though you will have to move your feet. After all, tennis is a well-disguised form of exercise, unless you happen to be playing singles, then the disguise is not so compelling and believable.

Two steps. How can I promise such magic? Anticipation. The Bryan brothers call it half the battle, and it might be more than that. Or at least two extra steps. Or even more painfully, two fewer steps if you are not anticipating and positioning properly. I don't know about you, but speaking for my once incredibly quick feet, but now aging body, I can't afford to give up two steps that are out there somewhere that I'm not accessing through either ignorance or laziness.

In my doubles clinics, I'm seeing tremendous improvement in player's overall play, just because they are learning to read the game better. I try to slip in a little stroke mechanics when they are not watching, but most of this leap forward (about two steps actually), is from better anticipation. Since we all play matches, and enjoy winning, the real question is, can we afford not to anticipate?

Four Steps? Consider this, if you are two steps slower than you need be, and your opponent is two steps faster because they anticipate, you are in fact, giving up four steps, and going to get killed, even if you have the same exact strokes (or even if you are better). Two 3.5s playing each other, one anticipating, one not, would be the equivalent of a 4.0 playing a 3.0 even though they both have 3.5 level strokes. The "3.0" is running all over the court chasing down shots, while the "4.0" is slightly adjusting their position and waiting for the ball to come to them and then enjoying watching themselves send the "3.0" on yet another wild goose chase. Ever play this match? I have, from both perspectives (before and then after I knew better).

Dumbing Down As Social Convention: I often watch matches around the club, league or social, and there seems to be some secret pact or unwritten code, or perhaps wishful dreaming on some people's part, that everyone will dumb down their game, strategy and anticipation so I won't have to work so hard, think about what I'm doing, and move a little (so I won't have to move a lot, or give up on balls I should have reached with those two extra steps). Resist the pull of socially induced mediocrity.

The truth and the TRUTH: The truth is, when your opponent hits the next shot it could go anywhere. Anywhere (lower case truth). But if they hit one hundred shots from that same position, there would be a very obvious and quite predictable pattern where the balls landed (TRUTH). Especially where the balls that landed in the court went. So predictable even, that if your opponent saw that you were anticipating where their shot would land, and tried to mix you up by placing shots differently, the pattern of those that landed in, wouldn't change that much. Especially if you hit a strong shot to them. In fact, the better your opponent, the more predictable the shot. Whoa! That's a mind blower.

And yet you all know this to be true, at least subconsciously. That's why we all like playing with better players, or at least players of our own level. Less crazy, random, lucky shots. Right? If we play a weaker player, we usually win because they miss too many shots, but they always hit some crazy winners (and shamelessly brag about them, "I aced so-in-so" for all to hear), and you never really get your rhythm, and don't really play your best game, because you are not getting very good balls to hit.

Everyday Science and Math Speaks: So without even trying, we clearly already anticipate some. But we could be at least two steps better, depending on your level of cluelessness. As we have discussed here many times, due to physics, geometry, physiology and the skill and psychological makeup of your worthy opponent (they have favorite shots), where their next shot is going to go is very predictable, most of the time. How most of the time? Very most of the time. I'll watch a club match and I can anticipate the next shot almost every time. It is true, I've been doing this tennis gig quite a while, probably longer than you, and yet you know more than you think you do. You just have to "open your eyes."

Obvious Stuff: In the simplest of scenarios, when you hit cross court and wide, the vast majority of the time, a ball that comes back (and is in -- the only ones you have to get), is going to be coming back cross court and wide. A ball hit down the middle is going to tend to come back down the middle. Take two steps over and just be done with it. Anticipation is often just ridiculously this simple.

Why don't people do it? Fear (remember, that next shot could go anywhere -- but won't most of the time), or laziness. "I'm playing -- PLAYING -- here. RELAXING. I don't want to think that hard."

Thinking: OK, but these same people seem to like winning. And believe me, they are still thinking. It might be about Aunt Martha's daughter's upcoming wedding and the present they haven't bought yet, or how could their trusted partner have just fluffed that last volley when they set them up so well, or that they are only two points from winning this set and then closer to winning this match and with this win, they might actually get bumped to 3.5 this year, finally, and then the cool people will want to play with them..., but believe me, they are thinking. Just not about the one thing that could really help them actually get "quicker" and do better.

Here is another one. If the ball is hit on an angle, especially a lot of angle, move up as well as out, it's going to be "short." And if you hit hard down the middle, it is most likely to come back hard, deep and down the middle. Move back, as well as to the center.

Examples: Below are a couple of diagrams showing proper movement in doubles after you or your partner serves. It is easy to expand this to other parts of play. In Fig. A, the server (S) serves out wide to the receiver (R). The most likely return is to the shaded area (gray), so the server should take a couple steps to his right, and move forward a bit to cut off the angle return. In Fig. B, the server (S) serves wide in the Ad Court, and anticipates (takes two steps) to his left to meet the returner's (R) cross-court return with a forehand. In Fig C, the Server in the Deuce court serves down the middle and anticipates a return back up the middle, and prepares for a forehand. Will the return always land in the gray area? No. Will it land there enough to anticipate and save two steps? Yes.

Similarity and Change: Basically, in the vast majority of situations, the ball coming back will bear some resemblance to the ball that was sent to them in the first place. The bigger the change, the more likely the error. The tougher your shot, the harder it will be for them to change (the direction, height, spin, speed). The more they change the shot (say direction, height and speed, for example) the more likely they will miss. They miss, you win.

Fear and Reality: So your fear is well founded. The ball could go anywhere on this next shot. But if they have any real chance of beating you, they won't be able to take too many risks, and their reply will be predictable. Take two steps over and get ready to play better. Everyone plays better when the ball comes to them as opposed to having to sprint across the court trying to save a shot. And just let go when they do hit a brilliant or lucky shot, no matter how much they brag and go on about it ("just calm down already"). Remind your self, each time they give in to a wild hare, you are that much closer to winning. Not every point, just the match. And that coveted 3.5 (4.0, 4.5, 5.0 etc...) rating you've been daydreaming about when you should have been focused on anticipation. Good luck!

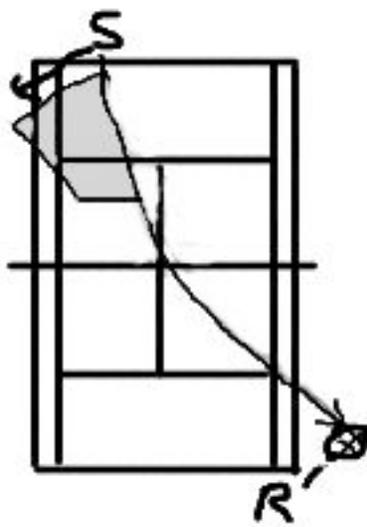


Fig. A

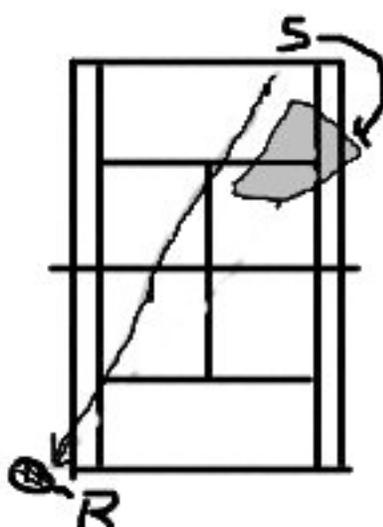


Fig. B

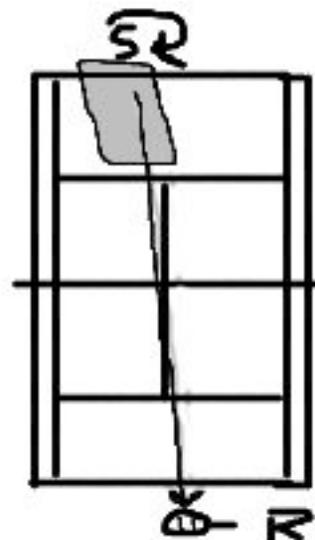


Fig. C