



November 2011
Volume 17, Issue 11

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

The Only Point You Can't Afford to Lose

There is only one point you can't lose in a match. Match point against you. None of the others are fatal. One of the great things about tennis is your opponent has to beat you. As long as you don't lose match point against you, you have a chance. Incredible comebacks are possible, because nobody can "run out the clock."

Yet we worry so much about losing individual points that it prevents us from executing a long-term strategy that gives us the best chance of winning.

For example, we know that the vast majority of shots travel across the middle of the net, but we hug to the alley anyway because if a ball gets by us on that side, we will surely lose the point. If I told you to stand in the middle, because 80% of the balls would come to you, and only 20% would get by you, most everyone would agree that is the best thing to do. But almost no one would actually do that. Not only that, but if your partner got passed down the alley, there is a good chance you would tell her to cover her alley, even if you knew somewhere in the back of your logical mind, that covering the alley gives you less of a chance of winning the match. Such is the power of emotion, and the desire of the ego not to get caught with the hand in the cookie jar (even though, if cookies are the goal, that is the only place you are going to find them).

Strategy is a plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall aim. This can be contrasted with a tactic, which is an action or strategy planned to achieve a specific end. Win a match (strategy) vs. win a point (tactics). Or perhaps we could say, he won the battle (a point), but lost the war (a match).

George Washington perhaps stands out among great strategists, as he lost practically every battle he fought, except the last one (Yorktown), which won the Revolutionary War and founded our country. He understood that if he could just keep his army intact, and not get caught and destroyed by the superior British forces, that eventually, he would have an opportunity to catch them out and trap them when they over-reached their bounds. Think what would have happened if the colonists had fired him because he was a loser. We can shudder at the thought, or perhaps simply enjoy our tea and crumpets this afternoon and toast the Queen. In contrast, Robert E. Lee, who is considered a far better general, won many a battle against overwhelming odds, only to be caught out when he got over-confident and ambitious at Gettysburg. He forgot what Washington knew, that the other side had to come to him, and if he could defend and evade long enough, he could exhaust the other side's resources and will to fight. Lee's offensive tactics ended up costing the loss of too many men, which the rural south had far fewer of in the first place than the more urban, densely populated north.

Let's look at tennis this way. Your best chance, short of tying their shoelaces together on the changeover, is making them hit the difficult shots, while you hit the easy ones. Over time, if you are hitting easy shots, and they are hitting hard ones, you should win unless they play amazingly well, which means you were not going to win anyway. Side note: the way that leagues are set up these days, the competition is relatively equal, so there is little chance that you are going to play someone who is miles better than you and can consistently make those difficult shots. Thus strategy becomes more important in a world where the skills are artificially equalized.

If the ball comes right to you, it is easier to hit than if you have to run or reach for it. One way to say this in tennis terms, is if you miss a ball that is right to you, that is considered an unforced error (a shot you should make), vs. a ball that you

Orindawoods Junior Championships

The Orindawoods Jr Championships will be held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday November 4-6. All the courts at the Club will be used on those days. Sorry for the inconvenience.

We feel that it is important to let the juniors of Orindawoods and Contra Costa County have events each month to help build the game of tennis for the future. November is our turn. Other clubs use their courts on other months. Thanks to all who participate.

If we have no rain, there may very well be some courts available on Sunday afternoon. Call the Club to find out. Thanks.

Pro Shop Closed

The Pro Shop will be closed on the following holiday dates.

- Thanksgiving weekend, 11/24-26
- Christmas, 12/24-25
- New Years, 12/31, 1/1.

Remember there is no junior program the week of Thanksgiving, as that week is a school holiday.

Pool closing

After a wonderful season, the pool is closing on Monday, Oct 31. Thanks for a wonderful year, and we look forward to seeing you in May when we reopen. The exact date will be determined by the local weather patterns.

Upcoming League Matches

Monday	Oct 24	courts 4-6	9am-1pm
Sat	Oct 29	courts 4-6	11am-2pm
Sun	Oct 30	courts 4-6	11am-2pm
Monday	Oct 31	courts 4-6	9am-1pm
Friday	Nov 4	all courts	9am-1pm
Friday	Nov 7	courts 4-6	9am-1pm
Sat	Nov 12	courts 4-6	11am-2pm
Sun	Nov 13	courts 4-6	11am-2pm
Mon	Nov 14	courts 4-6	9am-1pm
Friday	Nov 18	courts 4-6	9am-1pm
Sat	Nov 19	courts 4-6	11am-2pm
Sunday	Nov 20	courts 4-6	11am-2pm

have to scramble for and miss which is considered a forced error (not your fault, credit to your opponent for a good shot).

So a good strategy would be to stand where they are going to hit it, hit the ball to where you can make it, make them move / reach, and force them try to hit the ball where it is more difficult to make the shot, and where they are likely to miss. In most situations in tennis, the easiest place to hit the ball is in the middle of the court. The net is lower, the space to hit into is larger, most of the time you are sending the ball back the way it came, and hitting between your doubles opponents can cause confusion. Hitting down the alley, or the sideline, over the highest part of the net, with a boundary near by (sideline), off a ball that is coming from the cross court (most shots do) is certainly more difficult than hitting in the middle. The other place to hit is far wide, away from your opponent's net player. Out of their reach, but the trouble is that you can hit it out (too wide), and when you hit it in, you have put your partner in a difficult situation of having to choose between covering the line or not. The middle is best. Once again, few would disagree with me here.

If we mapped where successful players stand ("the power positions"), a large part of the time they would be in the shaded areas of Fig. 1, a & b (page 4). Unsuccessful players would spend a lot more time in the shaded areas of Fig. 1, c. Yet how many of us set out to take up certain positions on the court? Most of us just chase what happens, with no premeditation at all. What a shift it would make in our results if we stood where we were strong, and made our opponents attempt to pull us out of there, rather than surrender the power positions on the court before a shot is even fired.

Few pursue this strategy of hitting to the middle. Few stand where it is best to stand. Something is missing, something is preventing us from acting in our best interests. Sometimes it is knowledge, but often it is more that just knowing what to do. What is missing is the will to win. And by win, I mean the war, not the battle. It is the belief, or the faith, to give up winning every point, for the greater goal of winning the match (or perhaps the even greater goal of becoming a much better player, rather than holding on to what you have, which won't take you any further). Don't lose sight of your goal in the heat of the battle. One definition of insanity is that when you lose sight of your goals, you redouble your efforts. I see this played out all the time. People trying so hard with a failed strategy.

Last month I wrote about doubt. How the net person wants to cover the middle, and how the baseline player wants to hit in the middle. The baseline player achieves his goal by creating doubt in the net person's mind. This is strategic thinking. The team that controls the middle, will control the match. Top players are not concerned with individual points, per se, but who is gaining control of the crucial territory. Tennis becomes a game of chess, or Asian game of go. A baseline player will hit down the alley, or lob, even though it is a harder shot, to get his opponent out of the middle later in the match. Winning the alley shot is not important, getting your opponent to give you easier shots later, is.

We can afford to lose points. Even late in the match we are still trying to win the battle of the middle. No single point is so important that I can't use it by losing it to gain an advantage.

In a recent match, I was up against some good servers, and I was struggling with my return, but I kept fighting for control of the middle. We lost a close first set, and throughout that and most of the second set, my opponents controlled the middle. I continued with my strategy, just barely avoiding complete and total frustration, I soldiered on. At 5-5 in the second, I hit three consecutive returns of serve through the middle that set up my partner for winning volleys in the middle of the court. Only afterwards did I realize that after losing the battle of the middle for 95% of the match, had I won the war. Funny how sometimes we don't even know what is happening, especially inside our opponent's head (if there ever was an endorsement for not giving up, this is it). Somehow my opponent got scared, covered the alley (where truthfully, I had only successfully made a couple of shots in almost two sets), let balls go by that he had been hitting before. At the crucial moment, I kept to my strategy, and he let go of his. Looking back, I probably only won 25% of the return points, but when it mattered, I came through. Or my opponent let me through.

Normally we would think that winning 25% would be a failed strategy, but in the right circumstances (obviously we had to hold our own serve a lot), that might be what is most successful and leads to the crucial opportunity in the match. Good luck out there.

The Meaning of Cheating

Cheating is an ugly topic, and often an ugly thing in tennis. It can be rampant in certain circles, like junior tennis, or league tennis. Often we want to ignore it, as the underbelly of the game that no one wants to admit exists, but as Byron Katie encourages us to do, we have to "love what is." Or in other words, cheating exists, so deal with it.

Wishing cheating away does no good. Getting angry and frustrated, enraged in fact, only hurts your own game most of the time.

Quotes of the Month:

"It takes a lifetime to build a good reputation, but you can lose it in a minute." – Will Rogers.

"There is no greater misfortune than to underestimate your enemy." -- Lao Tzu

"If you know your enemy and you know yourself you need not fear the results of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself you will succumb in every battle."

– Sun Tzu, *Art of War*



Orindawoods Tennis Club

650 Orindawoods Dr
Orinda, CA 94563
USA

Phone:

925-254-1065

Fax:

925-254-1380

Website:

www.orindawoodstennis.com

Executive Tennis Director:

Keith Wheeler
[orindawoodstc@
sbcglobal.net](mailto:orindawoodstc@sbcglobal.net)

Head Pro:

Patric Hermanson
PatricTennis@yahoo.com

Associate Pro:

Anna Marie Gamboa
gamboa.tennis@yahoo.com

Junior Tennis Staff:

George Kaiser
Andrew Li

Weekend Staff:

George Kaiser

Newsletter Editor:

Keith Wheeler

Associate Editors:

Patric Hermanson
Marcy Sharafian

**[www.
orindawoodstennis
.com](http://www.orindawoodstennis.com)**

*Reservations, Club
calendar, weather and
court updates, lesson
programs and much
more!*

Of course, there is a second ugly side to cheating that people who don't cheat themselves are often resistant to sign up for. And that is, accusing someone of cheating. Questioning someone's ethics and morality is something that is not done lightly, and almost anyone will take offense to it, even the most ardent crook. So what was a pleasant match, and nice way to spend your recreation time, has turned into something ugly. Few want that. Often the accusation (which can be proved) is considered more of an offense, than the cheating (which can't be proved). The cheater is almost daring you not to make a scene. That is part of their power.

If we look to the article above and think strategically, the goal is to win the match (war), not the individual point (battle), then any individual point (except match point against you) is not that important, and you can certainly recover from. That is, if the loss of that point doesn't cause you to wig out and lose the entire match.

So do we just ignore cheating and cheaters? Let them just keep taking points away from you that you felt you have won? That is one strategy. But it can be hard to keep your cool under such abuse. Especially if it is well-timed to be the most disturbing.

Another strategy is not to play with people that cheat. There are many foursomes that have been hand selected because everyone is friends, and friends don't cheat each other. People who don't behave are not invited back. For recreational tennis, this might be the most pleasant model. Of course if you are playing league, or tournaments, this is not an option. In every league, we know of dreaded opponents. Our teammates counsel us beforehand, unwittingly amping up the stakes before we even sit down at the table.

Of course you can call for a line's person in a league or tournament match. The one problem with a line's person is that the cheating may occur near the end of a match or set, and the damage is done, and there is no getting that crucial point back. And you are also left dealing with possible damaging emotions right at the time when you have to really bear down and focus. Though no points are fatal (see above), this takes superhuman efforts at times to overcome these last-second ethical challenges to your emotional control.

So what do we have here? Cheating happens. It's ugly. It only costs one point, unless you let it bug you. It tends to happen on big points. And officials only help if they are present, and they often aren't.

The secret to dealing with cheating is how you respond to it. A large part of controlling how you react is understanding what cheating means.

Cheating means that your opponent doesn't think they can beat you.

Come to think of it, that's pretty good information to have, isn't it?

And what if they do win because they cheated? It is painful, but there is at least one person in the world who knows what really happened, and who they actually are.

Believe me, everyone knows who the cheaters are. Some people would rather win a relatively meaningless match in a small town like Orinda than have their reputation intact. That is their choice, but they are delusional if they don't think people notice, and think the less of them for it. What goes around comes around. Nobody plays for free.

As for mistakes, they happen. I'm sure everyone has missed a line call now and then. If it happens once, give them the benefit of the doubt. But we are not talking about your friend Sam who has missed a couple of calls in the past six months, are we? And Honest Sam, well, to be truthful, misses them both ways. In his favor, and against. Honest mistakes. We're talking about someone who trims the court on a fairly consistent basis, and more when the pressure is on. Each one of us could make a list of known cheaters. Being tennis director, I know a lot of people, and I hear a lot of stories. My list is probably bigger than yours. People who off the court are great, but get lost in the pressure.

Some players are so honest, so afraid of missing a call that they give an extra couple of inches just to be sure they don't unwittingly cheat. Nice people, but that is not so good either. They are cheating themselves. Perhaps more socially acceptable, but the Code of Tennis says the point is to get the call correct. What else do the rules say?

The Code says:

1. Player makes calls on own side of the net
2. Opponent gets the benefit of the doubt.
3. Ball touching any part of the line is good
4. Ball that cannot be called out is good, whether you saw it or not.

5. Either player in doubles can make a call, but the player looking down a line is much more likely to be accurate than the player looking across the line. (see 9).
6. Treat all points the same regardless of their importance
7. Request an opponent's help if you couldn't see, and accept his verdict. If neither you nor your opponent are sure, the ball is good.
8. If you correct an out call, the ball is good and you lose the point. On a service call error that touched the net, a let is played.
9. If partners disagree on a call, it is good. And the point is lost.
10. Audible or visible calls must be made
11. Calls should be prompt, before you see if you made the return shot.
12. Spectators never make calls

Is cheating bad? Does it make you a bad person? Does it damn one to hell? Fire and brimstone?

It can certainly cause the loss of respect of others, and could cost you some tennis friends. Cheating is a weakness, like alcoholism, or drug abuse. Something that happens when the conditions are such that the person is not strong enough to overcome the temptation to try to get away with something "not quite legal," or "good for them." Everyone fails at something. Unlike cheating in a tennis match, often it is private. There is some place where they couldn't stand the pressure. Perhaps it is their taxes, or their eating habits while on a diet. Just couldn't walk past the fridge.

What we need is self-love and compassion, and the knowledge that if I lose this point, this match, this contract, some money or this job, even gain some weight, I'm still a good person.

Tennis is a competitive game. I'm competitive. A competitor is someone who keeps his eye on the prize, no matter what. The object is to win. A battle of wills. A fight won by the hearts and minds. Cheating means that I don't think I can win this match, and that is pretty much the last thing a competitor wants to tell their opponent.

Sure cheating can have a payoff. I get the point, I upset my opponent, they may fall apart, and I win easily. My behavior is rewarded. But not always. My actions may have the opposite effect. I don't know who is on the other side of the net. There is an old adage that I try to keep in mind when playing. Never give your opponent a reason to want to beat you.

Remember, the Japanese started WWII with a sneak attack that gave them a huge advantage in the war, and in turn, motivated their opponent to crush them in the end. Best to let sleeping dogs lie. Sun Tzu in the Art of War suggests that you should know your opponent. Lao Tzu counsels us to respect them in the Tao Te Ching. Never underestimate them, think that they will just roll over and give up because you have pulled a fast one on them.

And if I win, the trophy or league title may have my name on it, but winning by cheating isn't winning. Everyone knows, especially you. Your weakness taints everything positive that you accomplished. 99% hard work and moral behavior is tainted by the one bad call you made in the crucial game of the crucial match. The power of self-delusion is strong, but somewhere deep in the dark night, we all know when we messed up. Best to avoid the pain of that by knowing we gave our all, did our best, and treated everyone, our opponent, and ourselves, fairly. It is a goal we may not always be able to achieve, but let's give it a shot. Good luck out there!



