



Orindawoods Tennis News

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Orindawoods Tennis Club: 925-254-1065; www.orindawoodstennis.com

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

Holiday

Pro Shop Hours:

I can't believe we are talking about the Holidays so soon, but the Pro Shop will be closed:

November 24, 25 & 26

December 24 & 25

Dec. 31 & Jan. 1

Also:

No Junior Program

Thanksgiving week (11/21-25).

Used Ball Drop

The Club has a "used ball drop" just inside the lobby doors. If you are done with your tennis balls, we would appreciate if you dropped them in the ball drop. We can even use balls that have lost their bounce (we have a pressure tank that revives them). Used balls are great for the ball machine, the junior program and other worthy causes.

Even balls worn down to the rubber can be useful. There is a company that takes old balls and recycles them into tennis courts. We are looking into shipping balls that are beyond reviving for our uses to them.

Those of you who have contributed in the past, thank you! Everyone, please help us out with used balls. They're of no use to you. (ha ha).

Quotes of the Month:

"If you can't be a poet,
be the poem."

-- David Carradine

"He who has overcome his fears
will be truly free." – Aristotle

Reindeer Games

Dec. 11th, 2-4 p.m.

Save the Date!!!!

New Phone App for Reservations

Have you tired **PlayTennisConnect**? You can sign in and make your court reservations on your smart phone (sorry, not available on dumb phones). Download the app from the usual sources (Apple App Store, Google Play). The app is free for Club members. It's so easy, you open the app, sign in using your existing OW username and pass code and you are up and running. You follow the simple path to reserve courts at Orindawoods. The motto is "tap, tap, play". Three clicks and you are done. You may never use the computer to make a reservation again. It's that much better! I'm loving PlayTennisConnect. Enjoy!

Court Rules

"Rule of the Month"

No back-to-back tennis reservations. Players cannot be part of a foursome for two consecutive court reservation spots (on any court). We have a shared use facility, and that means that we have to treat each other with respect, and only use our fair share of the court resources. Playing time is 90 minutes. If no one has the court after you, you are more than welcome to keep playing. It is even OK to come early, and start on an open court that is not in use. But to reserve courts for more than 90 mins., is not fair. Give others a chance. You'd ask the same of them.

This idea is central to what makes Orindawoods so wonderful and attracted so many of us in the first place. It is a warm, welcoming place, with very little privilege, elitism, snobbery, greed or cliques. We look out for each other, and treat each other with respect. Like it says on our banner above:

"I like this place, and could willingly waste my time in it." –Shakespeare.

What I Learned at USPTA

Last month Executive Tennis Director Keith Wheeler attended the USPTA World Conference in Indian Wells. There were many courses on the various business sides of tennis, as well as fun stuff on stroke production, psychology, strategy and fitness. My favorite sessions were: Momentum by **Emma Doyle**, the serve, by **Jeff Salzenstein**, The Top Ten New Stats in Tennis by **Craig O'Shannessy**, Delegating by **Fasil Hassan**, and the Hall of Fame roundtable featuring **Todd Martin, Rosie Casals, Pam Shriver and Lindsay Davenport**. **Peter Burwash** gave an interesting talk on the history of the game and **Todd Martin** was the keynote speaker. Martin is currently the CEO of the Tennis Hall of Fame. There was also a Buyer's Show, where we could see the latest and greatest products in the tennis industry. Several other pros from NorCal attended, so it was good to catch up with old friends and discuss the state of local tennis.

Tennis Tip:

The Four Fears

There are fears that we have to deal with, being human, that really have an impact on our ability to play the game of tennis. I'm sure there are more than four, but let's look at four fears that really, every day, affect the way we play, often for the worst.

1. **Falling Over.** Most animals stand on four legs; we stand on two. That makes balance unbelievably important. If we start to fall, or sense that we could, pretty much every other concern (like hitting a tennis ball in the court) goes out the window. You will do everything you can not to fall over. Even in sports where "falling" is part of the game, like diving in volleyball, you have to rehearse these

moves over and over again so that you feel safe moving towards the ground at a high rate of speed.

2. **The Ball Will Get By Me.** It's a big one. Related to "swinging and missing," which might be another way to state this fear. Missing the ball is more a tennis specific fear than falling over, but comes up in other sports too, like baseball or soccer (if you are a goalie).
3. **The Ball Will Bounce Twice In Front Of Us.** Again, this is a fear that is specifically related to the rules of tennis. The ball can't bounce twice, so we will do "almost anything" to try to get it before the second bounce.
4. **The Fear Of Looking Bad,** or The Fear That "They" Will Notice I Don't Know What I'm Doing. Often lurking in the subconscious, we want to feel accepted, that we belong on this court, with these people.

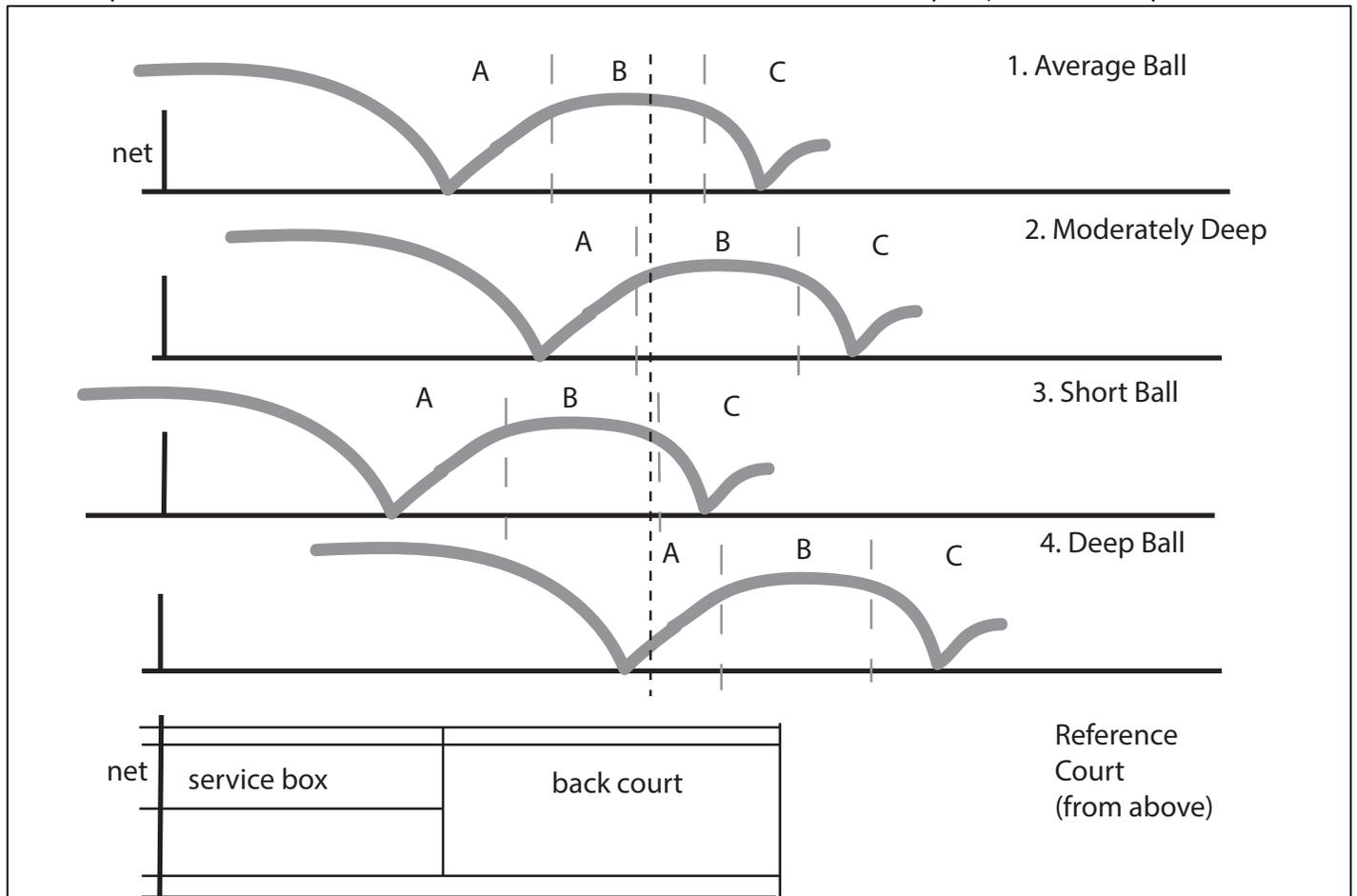
An interesting thing about these fears is that they align in **this specific order**. As mentioned above, you start to fall, and all the rest doesn't matter, you do what you can to stay up. If we take that as a given (in tennis and everyday life), then we get to the fears within the game of tennis. We are primarily, first and foremost, afraid of the ball getting by us. We don't want to be overpowered, we don't want to be "late." We certainly don't want to get hit.

The irony is that it takes great discipline and will to actually be late. Most of us are **so afraid of being late**, that when we feel like we are going to be late, we overreact and are almost always early on contact. You would think that if you were trying to be "on time", when you got it wrong, about half would be early, and half would be late. But this is not what happens. 95% of the miss-timings are on the early side. We may be late preparing, but by the time we get to contact, we are early because we rush to make up. This fear often causes us to alter our stroke as well, from the proper vertical lift to a horizontal forward motion which damages our connection and ruins control of the ball.

Because we are afraid of the ball getting by us, we tend to do the logical thing, which is back up. Stand farther back, give ourselves more time. Much less chance that the ball will get by us.

Unfortunately, this leads us right into the jaws of fear number three, **the ball will bounce twice** before we can reach it. So at the last moment, we fear the ball is descending towards the second bounce, and we reach out and hit it before it does. Again, the fear leads to poor stroking. If the goal of tennis was merely to hit the ball, then no problem. However, when we panic and reach forward to make contact, we are changing, inadvertently, the way the racquet is pointing. We often make contact with the ball, but we miss the shot. We have been overwhelmed emotionally by our fear of the ball bouncing twice, and lash out and miss the shot.

Percentages: Which shot is coming towards us more often in our typical game, short and soft, or hard and deep? For the vast majority of us that aren't playing pro tennis, it is the short, soft ball that is occurring far more often. Take this idea a bit further, and ask, "Which balls we are making most of our errors on?" It's the short soft ball that causes the most problems. It's the hardest shot in tennis. Not the dreaded but far less frequent, hard and deep.



The Flight Path Of The Ball (See Diagram).

If we look at the average ball, it bounces around the service line and the second bounce is somewhere around the base line. We can either take the ball on the rise (zone A), or at the peak of the bounce (zone B) or when the ball is falling (zone C). Ideally, zone B is probably best. If we stand in Zone C, we start to sense that the ball is starting to fall, and we panic, and reach forward, being early on contact. If we get caught in Zone A, the ball is going quite fast at this point, and we may over react and swing early, fearing it will get by us. Both panic swings will result in the racquet getting to the ball too soon, and the face of the strings not pointing towards the desired target. Contact will also be compromised: too much of a collision, and not a rolling of the ball with it's fluid transfer of energy.



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Under stress, if we give into panic, we will hit the ball at the first moment that we can. If the ball is in front of us, we'll reach out and hit it too soon because we fear it will bounce twice. If we are way too close, and the ball is coming fast, we will also strike out at the ball and contact it too early. But, the interesting thing is, that if we are a little bit too close, but feel we can still get the ball, fear two will cause us to step back and make contact at the first place where we can control the racquet face and get the ball in. Whereas if we are a little too far back, and the ball is dying, we will tend to reach forward, rather than move forward. Fear three takes over. Therefore, if I have to choose between being a little too far back, or a little too far forward in my initial positioning, **it is much better psychologically to be a bit too close**, and have to back up, than to be a bit too far back and have to move forward (dark dotted line on the diagram).

Now of course not all balls come to us the same. Some are deeper, some are shorter. Ideally, we would stand in the perfect place for the average ball, and that would still leave us in Zone B for the moderately deep ball, and the short ball. See the dark, small dash line for all four types of balls. Only the deep ball leaves us in Zone A, but we can step back and take this ball in Zone B (or take those less frequent balls on the rise – in A). The rare ball that was going to hit right on the baseline, you might even have to take it out of the air (not pictured above).

The problem is, because the ball getting by us is a bigger fear for the untrained tennis mind, most people stand in zone B for the Deep ball (often behind the base line), which is too deep for the average ball, and way too deep for the short ball. And almost too far back even for the moderately deep ball, especially if you stand in the deeper part of Zone B for the Deep Ball. This means that the vast majority of the time, we are out of position (too far back).

The wise player is willing to get beat by the deep ball (their best shot), in order to play better on their opponent's more likely shots. This is winner's mind.

The Error Remains the Same: So another irony is that whether we fear we are late, or we fear that the ball will bounce twice in front of us, the result is that we swing forward and we are early. Even though the triggers might be the opposite (ball will pass us / ball won't get to us), the resulting error (swinging early) is the same. So thinking out of the box, one solution would be to always do the stroke the same, to the ideal contact point, out to the side, and stop trying to time the ball. **Take timing out.** The change of thought would be, **think of the ball as hitting the racquet, rather than the racquet hitting the ball.**

Climbing The Ladder. When we look at the average contact position of players in a match, the player that wins is almost always, on average, hitting the ball farther forward in the court, than the loser. Climbing the ladder refers to the idea that you want to be moving your court positioning forward as the point progresses, not moving back. Serena's famous "get out of Melbourne" shout from a few years back was a motivational reference to the fact that she was positioning herself too deep in the court, back where "Melbourne" was painted on the surface of the court by the back fence at the Australian Open. That's not to say that there is no time to back up and play defense, just don't make a habit of it.

The fourth fear, the fear of not looking bad, or that we don't belong, kind of drives all the others. So we chase that ball, using all of our powers of coordination, to make sure we make contact, forgetting, of course, that the goal of tennis is not to hit the ball, but to hit it over the net, to where we are aiming, with a certain speed and spin that gives us the best chance of winning the point.

We give all that up, in an attempt to "not look bad." It's not worth it, but in the short term, it becomes attractive when faced with that moment where we could miss. **Hold to your form, let the ball come to you.** Good luck out there!

The Triangle of Performance.

There is a relationship between the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical aspects of tennis. If you don't understand this relationship, at some level, you will always be getting in your own way and blocking your quest for peak performances. On the court, or anywhere in life.

Basically, the relationship works like a pyramid (see diagram). So go big, think Egyptian, or Mayan. The base of the pyramid (which is holding up everything above it, and therefore the most important part of the structure), is the spiritual. I don't necessarily mean God here, but your beliefs. The things you believe in, your values, the foundation of your life, your guiding principles, perhaps your soul. The things you know are true (even if they actually aren't).

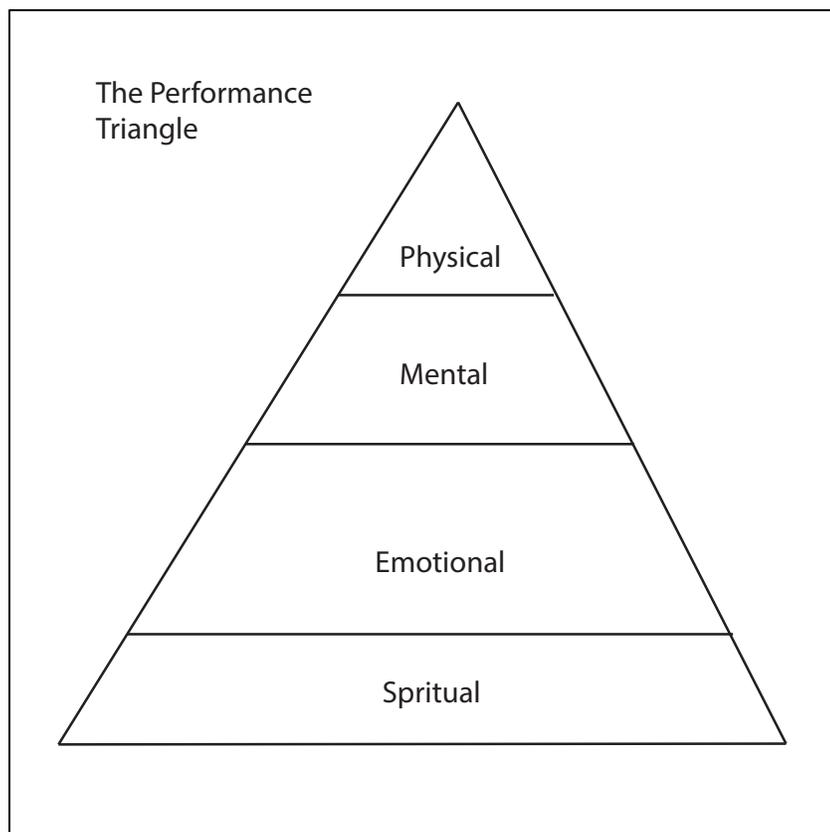
On top of the spiritual sits the emotional. Your emotions. We all have them, some seem stronger than others, some people rage, some cry, but all the emotions are all there. And they run the show. Not "us," not our brains, our ego.

Above the emotions on this hike up the Temple of Performance is the mental. The mental is how you use your brain, your thoughts, to try to manage your emotions. You attempt to think thoughts that help you. Sometimes you don't.

Finally, at the top of the pyramid, is the physical. Our physical performance. In this case, playing the game of tennis. But how well you play, how well the physical is expressed, is completely based on the three levels below, the mental, the emotional and the spiritual. Some days you feel great, and the game is easy. Some days, everything seems wrong, your life is a mess, and the game is difficult. How does that happen?

Let's say, down in the Spiritual you have a belief "I have to win or important people won't love me." So you are playing a match, and you start falling behind. The next level up, the emotional, starts to go crazy. Maybe you are upset, screaming and yelling, maybe you are nervous, maybe you feel depressed, maybe you feel choked up, like you can't breathe or are about to cry. So then you try to figure it out, use your mental skills. Maybe your coach said, "I don't care if you win or lose, play good points." That helps a little, you feel a bit calmer, you hit some good shots, but you are just barely holding on. Then you remember your dad saying after you struck out in little league, that you were a loser. Chaos again. Your game goes south, and you are starting from scratch again. You are an accomplished player, and you feel like you don't even know how to play. Like you never picked up a racquet. Both coordination and timing are shot.

Your emotions just overpower your physical skills, and even though you have good strokes and are a good player, the spiritual belief from way down below that you have to win to be



loved, torpedoed your every effort upstairs in the physical realm.

Let's say, after a lot of work with yourself, your coach, maybe a counselor, maybe your parents, you change that bad meaning to "Always do your best," instead of "I have to win to please important people."

Now you play a match. Your opponent is great, playing so well, but you are competing. They are ahead, but you feel great. You know you are doing your best, and the only person you are comparing yourself to is yourself. You make a bad shot, and you ask, was that poor shot selection? (not doing your best). You frown, realizing that was a mistake, but you reaffirm, using your mental skills, to "always do your best" and pick better shots in the future. You feel loose and easy, and you compete for the duration of the match. At the end of the match, it gets quite close. Maybe your opponent is having to deal with their own "need to win," but you stay focused on "just doing your best." Maybe you win, maybe you don't, but the entire experience has been fueled by a belief that you have control over, and that doesn't allow your emotions to hijack your game, your spirit, your life.

It's hard work to clean up your spiritual level. Much of it is subconscious, but what choice do we have? If we can't get the ground floor empowered and inspired, we can never build a big and successful pyramid. Our monument to tennis.

We need beliefs that allow us to let go, to give up control and tension, and just play. Just perform. Good luck!

"It's not that hard. When I'm not hittin', I don't hit nobody. But when I'm hittin', I hit anybody. – Willie Mays.