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

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

## **Twilight Tennis BBQs at the Club this Season**

We have had three great Twilights so far this summer. The summer party season will end with our final **Twilight, Sunday, October 11**. Tennis will be played from 4-6 p.m., and followed by our Kinder's BBQ steak or chicken dinner.

Don't miss this last chance at amazing Twilight Tennis BBQ fun. The cost is \$20/person, and you need to bring your own beverage (tastes do vary). Please register by telling Keith (e-mail: [orindawoodstc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:orindawoodstc@sbcglobal.net)).

This is our last Twilight until next summer, so don't miss out on the fun!

## **Building Your Doubles Game: Guessing in Tennis**

Guessing in tennis? Well, actually we call it anticipation, a much nicer term. Anticipation seems to hint that we might actually be using our brains or instincts to figure out what is about to happen, where as guessing, implies a lot of luck, or lack there of (if you are wrong).

**Important Facts and Ramifications** (for Doubles; these are taken from Craig O'Shannessy's awesome study of the 2015 Australian Open Doubles):

1. The **average doubles point** is 3 (men's) to 4 (women's) shots. Most likely, the shot you are hitting right now is the only one you are going to get. Make it effective.
  2. **Rallies of 0-4 shots are 68% (women's) - 81 % (men's) of the points.** 5-9 shots, 27% (women's)-17 % (men's) of the points. Rallies lasting over 10 shots, 5% (women's)-2% (men's). The VAST majority of the points are 0-4 shots (0 is a double fault).
  3. The vast majority of shots cross **over the middle** of the net.
  4. When you hit from the **base line**, if your shot is the last shot hit, the odds are you will make 20% winners, and 80% errors. (i.e., you don't want the back court shot to be the last shot of the rally if you like winning, or you want to force the opponents to hit their last shot from the baseline). Not only that, but the team that hits the most aces usually loses. Men's or women's (i.e. serving is a back court shot).
  5. When you hit the last shot of a rally from the **net**, the percentages flip: 80% winners, 20% errors (i.e. you want to be hitting from the net).
  6. In doubles, about **40% of the points end in a winner. 31% (women's) to 38% (men's) of points end in a forced error.** Only about 29% (women's) to 21% (men's) end in an unforced error. That means that when your opponents hit you a ball you can handle, and you just hit it back to the backcourt player to keep it in, you are playing for them to miss (unforced error, which is only somewhere around 25% of the points – in other words, dumb play). So back to #1, if this is the one shot you're going to get in this rally, you need to force your opponent somehow (unless you are totally on the defensive, and even then, perhaps you can force them with a lob to the backhand).
  7. Looking at how **points break down**, your best chance to win the point is when your team is hitting a first serve (men: 74%, women 63%). So if you hit in at least two out of three first serves you are going to hold serve the vast majority of the time.
  8. Your second best chance to win the point in Men's doubles is your second serve (54% men's), In women's doubles, you only win 47%, so women win more points on the return.
  9. Third best chance in Men's doubles is when your team is returning a second serve (46%). For Women's doubles, it's hitting a second serve (47%).
- Basically, attack weak shots. The problem is, there are not many second serves in good doubles (servers want to hit in 2 of 3 first serves), and so you need to capitalize on this opportunity when it comes. And your worst chance to win the point is on their first serve. On their first serve, it is probably going to your backhand, and you need to get the ball back

## **Dues Payments**

Please send your dues payments in envelop provided in your billing packet. They go directly to a bank, and not to the Club, or even the Orindawoods Association business office. If you hand them directly to us at the Club (which seems so simple), it just delays everything, and you are likely to get a late charge, and have to spend the time dealing with getting that removed when in fact you turned it in on time, just not to the proper place.

Thanks so much!

## **Ball Drop Thanks You**

The Used Ball Drop (located outside of the Pro Shop door), accepts used tennis balls of a reputable background (ones that bounce). Please donate these worn, but not dead balls, to our Ball Machine and Junior Program.

Rather than weigh down your tennis bag, and eventually toss them in the trash, giving the balls to the Used Ball Drop will give these balls a second life, and lighten your load at the same time! Your karma goes up, and your back ache goes down.

## **Pool Closing**

The Orindawoods Tennis Club Pool will be closing on October 15<sup>th</sup>. It's been a great season. Hope you all had a fun splash. See you in May for next summer's fun in the sun.

in play and away from the middle, where their partner is standing. This is a tall order for winning points (about 25% of points end in an unforced error). All this means, there are few breaks of serve. What makes a winning strategy?

**Lesson (or ball machine) vs. Match Play.** Why do we often hit better in lessons than when we are playing? In a lesson, often we know where the ball is going. We have certainty. When we are playing, we need certainty. We play better with it. But what if we don't know where the ball is going? How can we have certainty? **Guess.**

You're going to do better with certainty than without it. Heck, the weatherman guesses every day. Get over yourself, and your need to be "right", guess. It's better if it is an educated guess, but guess. Please guess.

**Certainty vs. uncertainty:** Time is the biggest weapon in tennis. You give your opponent less time by standing closer, hitting harder, and (most importantly) mixing it up so that they don't know where the ball is going. If there is uncertainty in the mind of your opponent, your medium speed shot looks like a rocket, while the ball hit as hard as you can, looks pretty easy to them if they know where it is going. Therefore, anything you do that reduces your doubt, and increases their uncertainty is going to have a huge impact on the results. This is where anticipation comes in.

**First vs. Second:** On a first serve, your opponent doesn't know where you are going to hit the ball. You can go for either side, you can hit it hard, you can spin it, and you can go for the corners. There is a lot of uncertainty for the returner, and the only limitation is the skill of the server (speed, placement, spin, deception). Force the returner to hit a lot of backhands, because they are never sure when you are going to swing the ball out to the forehand, so they have to cover both sides (and that opens up the backhand target area for your serve).

When a second serve is played, the returner has much more certainty as to what is going to happen. The server has to make this shot land in the service box, or lose the point. So on a typical second serve, the returner knows 1) the serve will be slower, 2) it will land more in the middle of the box, and 3) bounce higher than your typical groundstroke.

With this knowledge, the smart returner will stand in closer, stand more towards the backhand side, so that the middle of the box is covered by his forehand, and wait with his hands a bit higher, anticipating a higher bounce. This also works against a player who is "just getting the first serve in," and doesn't attack you.

**I'm often asked, why forehands?** ("my backhand is stronger"). Forehands are more deceptive. It is much easier for most players to hit in multiple directions with a forehand (more uncertainty for the person receiving the ball), where most backhands go across the body the vast majority of the time (there are a few exceptions, very few).

Because you don't want to be facing a forehand if you are serving (and all that uncertainty as to where the return will go), it is crucial that you make 2/3s of your first serves, so you can get the ball to the backhand.

**Summing Up:** On a first serve point, the advantage is to the server. He has deception on his side, and all the uncertainty lies with the returner. On the second serve, the returner is much sure what is going to happen (there is the occasional great second serve in the corner, but this is the exception, and not the rule – play for the rule). So the returner should be able to attack the second serve, which means the serving team should have 1) less time, and 2) much more uncertainty.

**Winning or Losing, Strength or Weakness: Not As Much Difference In Response As You Think.** In a position of strength, we are pretty sure where the ball is going to be returned. We guess or anticipate that location. Big sever, net player looks for the ball in the middle. This is the #1 strategy in doubles. Pretty darn simple.

Now here is the trick. When we don't know where they are going to hit the ball (position of weakness), we are better off to guess as well. If they are truly in a position of strength (returning a second serve, hitting an overhead or volley close to the net), we will never get the ball if we stay neutral (not enough time – easy to overreact and miss). It's better to cover something rather than nothing. Make your best guess as to where you think the ball will go.

So interestingly, when things are going very well we anticipate, when things are going very poorly, we anticipate. Of course our educated guess from a position of strength is going to be much more accurate, but guessing is still our best bet when there is great uncertainty. Be certain. It is the more average exchanges (where no one has a clear advantage) that are the ones where it is much harder to anticipate accurately.

**Footwork and Alignment:** The better your footwork, and the better you align your shot, the more options you have as to where you can hit the ball (and therefore, the harder it is for your opponent to anticipate). So even if you know you want to hit the ball crosscourt, you will be much more effective if you line up in a position where you could also hit the ball down the line. If your stroke itself is much harder to read, you will be much less vulnerable to a player who anticipates well. They will be forced to guess, rather than know, what they think is going to happen.

**Playing The Points:** Top-level tennis is much more choreographed than you might think. Pros play out patterns of play, featuring shots that largely force a predictable response. Naturally we all play better if we know what shot is coming next. Those of us that play at the club level can use the same strategy to make the game easier for us too.

What follows are the basic patterns that are proven to work. My discussion below is if everyone is right-handed. Whether there are left-handers or right-handers involved, generally serve towards the backhand when you can.

These patterns of play are not the only plan, but they represent the most successful "Plan A":

**First Serve, Deuce Side:** Server serves down the middle (occasionally mixes it up to create doubt). Take enough off that you can get it to the backhand, and make 67%. Returner is in a position of weakness, probably worth guessing



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this return will be a backhand. Server's Partner at the net, can anticipate that the return will go back through the middle. If it doesn't, it was a weak serve (not your fault if you get passed down the alley). Returner's Partner stands either at the service line, or the base line, in a defensive position (if at the service line, look for the ball on the middle side– the volley from the server's partner will almost always go there).

**Second Serve, Deuce Side:** Server needs to get the ball in. Try to keep the serve deep with spin. Can't go for the corners as much (backhand side if possible, but can't double fault). Returner is a position of strength, knows the ball will be slow, central and high (very little uncertainty). Hit a forehand if at all possible (forehands are generally stronger, and much harder to read). Server's Partner: doesn't know where the return will go, alley, middle or wide. Position of weakness: guess one side or the other, usually cover the alley if you determine the return can be hit there (but take into account the returner's strengths and weakness, plus their tendencies). Returner's partner: Starting position closer to the net (close enough that if the ball goes back to the server, you can get very close to the net and in the middle when they return the ball). Your job is to take the middle and volley the fourth shot. You are not playing defense on second serve.

**First Serve, Ad Court:** Server needs to create uncertainty in the receiver's mind by mixing up the location. You want to force the return to go through the center of the court, where your partner should be waiting. Probably more serves placed outside to the backhand than in the middle. Returner doesn't know where the serve is going (uncertainty). Try to get the ball back in play. If the serve is huge, guess which side. Server's partner is looking for the return through the middle (if the ball goes down the alley, it was a weak serve – not your fault). Be ready for a backhand volley and take it, even if you are not confident (much better chance of winning the point at the net than at the baseline 80/20 vs. 20/80). Receiver's partner is in a defensive position, near the service line, or at the baseline (against really big servers and/or great net players).

**Second Serve, Ad Court:** Second serve, the server has to get the ball in. Try to keep it deep, with spin. Right-handed returner should have at least one foot in the alley. Stand in as close as you can. Forehand side covering the middle of the box (serve will be slower, central and bounce high). Generally, the tighter the server (bigger the point) the shorter the serve, so move up on big points. Server's partner (position of uncertainty), pick a side and cover it. Most returners can hit a forehand down the line, so that is a good place to start, then look for their tendencies. Receiver's Partner: anticipate a strong return and start in closer. If the ball gets back to the server, you want to be at the net, in the middle, looking for a backhand volley, by the time the ball comes back to you.

**Skills.** All of us have a limited time to play and to practice. We are not professional players. Most points are 3 to 4 shots. That is, 1) a serve, 2) a return, 3) serving team hits a volley or groundstroke, 4) returning team hits a volley or groundstroke. That's it. Most points are over by now (men's, 81% of the points are 0-4 shots, 68% in women's). Seldom second shots or second chances.

So if I was going to practice and try to improve, I'd make sure my serve, return (second serve return especially) and volley at the net were as good as they could be (forehand volley on the deuce side, backhand volley on the ad side).

With 1) a good first serve (2/3 in, directed to the backhand), 2) the ability to hit forcing shots when receiving weak second servers or returns, and 3) volley that I can put away when I'm close to the middle of the net, and I'm going to win a great deal of points. More than enough to win a doubles match. If I had a little extra time, I'd work on the second serve. Then maybe an overhead or two, to finish off points where they are really crippled. Remember, we want the last shot of the point to be played from the net, and the first two shots are played from the back (serve and return), so we want to place these shots so that they set up our partners at the net (either shots 3 or 4).

**Should I sever and volley or return and charge in?** Well, it's good exercise (keeps you in shape), but you won't hit a volley you can finish until the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> shot (providing they don't lob when you come in), and most points don't last that long, so it's a nice ad-on, but not an essential. Even doubles teams (Bryan Brothers) who come in all the time will tell you that they don't want the player coming forward to be hitting the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>

shot. If they are, they are no doubt losing. The serve or the return is to set up your partner at the net.

**What about the backhand?** Most first serves are going to the backhand, and the server's net player will be in the middle waiting for your return. Consistency is important. Get the backhand in. A lob would be nice, if the serve isn't too big. Be OK with a low success rate. You're basically waiting for a bad serving game by the severing team (get a bunch of second servers you can attack, or the net person misses a couple of volleys).

I watched a program on the tennis channel once that had a top player warming up for a match. She hit serves, returns (especially forehands), and volleys. When asked why she wasn't hitting her backhands, which was her weaker shot, she said, "If I have to hit many backhands, I'm losing. I'm working on how I'm going to win, not how I'm going to make losing not as bad."

That really opened my eyes. **Practice what is likely to happen, and how you plan to win.** The percentage of points you win when your opponent gets a first serve in and to your backhand is pretty low. You need to return as many of these as you can, but you're mainly hoping they miss. Most of the other situations (second serve returns and rallies), the ball is going slower, and you should be able to run around and hit a forehand. **Backhand volleys** at the net are very important, when you are on the ad side (your backhand volley is in the middle). So practice that, as that is often a weakness for many players, and thus an area where you can separate from others.

I remember when I was a junior playing tournaments and I was warming up for matches. I would rally with my opponent for 5 minutes or so, and then we would hit a few serves, and start playing. Sometimes I would think someone was really good, and that I was in trouble, but when the match started, I won easily. It's because rallying ground strokes is a very poor indicator of who is going to be strongest, because the two most important shots are the serve and the return. Most skilled players can rally, but can they play? Can they build a point? Can they anticipate? Do they understand the game?

Do you? Good luck out there!

### ***Fall Junior Tennis At Orindawoods*** **August 31<sup>st</sup> – December 11<sup>th</sup>**

The 2015 Fall Junior Program Clinics began the week of August 31<sup>st</sup> and will continue thru the week of December 7<sup>th</sup>. There are no classes the week of November 23-27. The 14-week program will be run by Head Pro Patric Hermanson and Assistant Pro Anna Marie Gamboa. Little Ones and Future Stars will be taught using aspects of the USTA 10 and under Development Program. There is still room in some classes (we will pro-rate the price).

<b>Orindawoods Clinics</b>	<b>Ages</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Cost Per Week One day / Two days</b>
<b>Little Ones</b>	<b>Ages 4-6</b>	<b>Tues and/or Thurs</b>	<b>3:15-4pm</b>	<b>\$160 / \$260</b>
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 using age appropriate balls and court size.				
<b>Future Stars</b>	<b>Ages 7-10</b>	<b>Tuesdays</b>	<b>4-5:30pm</b>	<b>\$320/ n/a</b>
The Future Stars Group is for our 7 to 10 year old players. The players will be working with 10 and under balls on 36', 60' and full courts. Stroke instruction, tennis games, and match play are all part of the curriculum as we work our way up to the green dot balls and the full court.				
<b>Tennis Development</b>	<b>Ages 11-14</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>4-5:30pm</b>	<b>\$320/ n/a</b>
In the Tennis Development Group we will work on refining technique, improving footwork and developing strategic awareness for successful match play. This class is for beginning through intermediate players ages 11 thru 14.				
<b>Tournament Training Invitation Only</b>		<b>Wednesdays</b>	<b>4:30-6:30pm</b>	<b>\$410 / n/a</b>
The Tournament Training Group is an invitation only class. Contact Patric about setting up a try-out.				

**Non-members** should at \$25 (Lil' Ones, only \$15).

**Pricing:** 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 the 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, or look on orindawoodstennis.com at the bottom of the home page for a court update.

**Tennis shoes required** (no "black soled shoes" that mark the court surface).

**Cell phone** use during class time is limited to emergencies or with consent of a coach.

**Contact** Head Pro Patric Hermanson to see if there is space available in the class you would like to participate in.