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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

Monday Night Team Tennis concluded on July 30. Winnie's Team 4 was crowned the MTT champion, and Barbara's Team 1 was awarded the loser's clinic prize for the team with the worst record. A real honor in MTT, where each week is a party, and tennis is the format!

Team	Captain	W-L	Ave. Wins/night
1. Team Four	Winnie	447-353	55.86 (of 100 possible)
2. Team Two	Lysbeth	410-390	51.25 (of 100 possible)
3. Team Three	Chris	406-394	50.75 (of 100 possible)
4. Team Five	Lynda / Nat	401-399	50.13 (of 100 possible)
5. Team One	Barbara	336-464	42.00 (of 100 possible)

As always, the food was fantastic and the weather was the weather. Thanks to all who participated, because participating is the real prize. And especially, a big Thank You to the Captains! See you next year!

Tennis Tip:

A Court of Thirds

We are getting near the fall, a beautiful time to play tennis here in Orinda. Several leagues are starting, and play is heavy in the fall. With this in mind, let's get back to our discussion of the game of doubles. After all, doubles is the tennis that so many of us enjoy and play, both socially and in competition.

As Vic Braden used to often joke, "half the people that played tennis today lost." So losing is part of playing a sport, and we have to come to some peace with that. But also, how can I beat those odds so that I do a bit better than 50%? Psychologist Allen Fox quips, "I never play anyone who is any good."

That is one tried and true method, but in some philosophical sense, you are cheating yourself of the thrill of victory, because a lot of the value of victory is that it is uncertain and unknown who would win. That is one of the things that makes it so exciting. No match, even the most one-sided, is a forgone conclusion, but a match that is even, or in which you are the underdog, has a much greater reward if you pull it off, than one which you expected to win. So hopefully, with a few ideas here, we can put us in a better position to win more than our fair share, even against worthy or challenging opponents.

Key Principle: There are various systems, or strategies, for playing doubles. Since the vast majority of shots cross through the middle area of the net, I believe that the team that controls the middle, controls the match. Over the years, we have discussed various ways that we can control the middle. This month I would like to offer a simple, but effective way of looking at the court that helps us control more of the action especially during the crucial first 3-4 shots.

Three Sections: If we divide the court into three sections (see fig. 1), this can help us build a strategy for controlling the middle. There is a left (A), middle (B) and right (C) section to the court when divided in this way. I've placed the divisions in the middle of the service box, meaning that the thirds are not exactly even, but are realistic to the game. Notice that these lines actually divide the service boxes into fourths (figure 2). So for the backcourt, think of the court divided into thirds. For net play, and for serving purposes, think of it as fourths.

Court Light Update

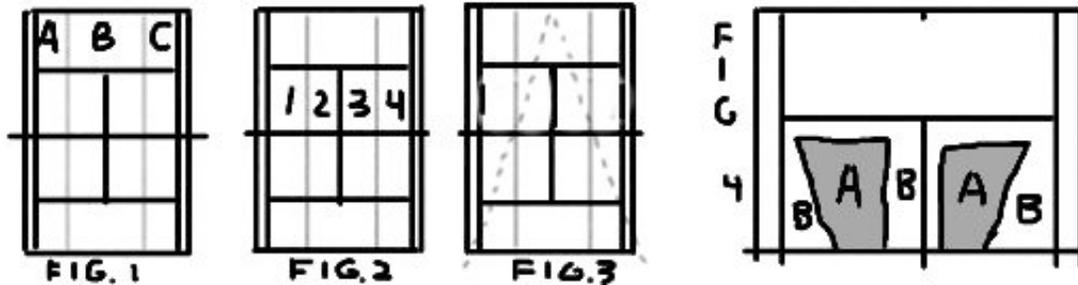
The City of Orinda planning department has changed their interpretation of our project from what we were told last winter, and requested that we go through the full planning process. This has delayed the construction we had planned for August, and we are still determining when that construction will take place (probably later this fall). Of course this may mean we may be without evening tennis for a while (with the days getting shorter), or a second option may be to wait until next summer to do the work. We will be studying all the options if and when we get the go ahead from the City of Orinda.

The lighting project (replacing the lights on courts 2 & 3) is intended to improve the lighting situation here at Orindawoods, by 1) putting in a new system that will last another 30 years, 2) greatly reducing the amount of light that is spilled into the neighborhood and nighttime sky, and 3) improving the quality of light on the courts for the players. The new lights accomplish all this by focusing the light much better. Contrary to the current system, where you can see the bare spot lights for miles away, with the new system, even if you were to stand directly under the lights, you couldn't see the bulbs (uses a series of mirrors to focus the light on just the court).

We believe that once the city and the neighbors see (stop being blinded by the light) that we are simply improving an existing situation, approval will follow. Thanks for your patience.

Pool Scene

Hope you are enjoying the pool this summer. There have been some nice hot days when a dip in the pool sure has been refreshing. The pool will remain open through the end of October, so keep splashing.



Players' Roles: In modern doubles, the players have various duties or jobs to perform. The job of the net person is to control the middle as best as possible (this means covering 2 and 3, or more realistically, 2 when they are on the left, and 3 when they are on the right side of the court – i.e, half of the middle). The back player's (server or returner) job is to defend the backcourt, and set up the net player by forcing the other team to hit to the center (2&3) where the net player is looking for shots.

If you are the back player (server or returner), in order to set up the point, you want to hit the ball where their team has limited options. Balls hit to the middle (B), ensure that the return will come back through the middle (see the dotted lines in Fig. 3), so that is a good place to start. B is the default target. When in doubt, hit it there. Lobs to B become the basic defensive play, and are seen throughout tennis at all levels. You can always fall back to that when you are in a jam.

Deuce Side: So let's play some points and see how this system works. Starting out, let's assume we are playing right-handed opponents. We'll talk about the lefties later. If you are serving, first point of the game, to the deuce court, you want the ball to end up in B. That means you are serving to 2, or the center part of the service box. That would be the right-handed player's backhand, an added bonus, as an inside out backhand away from your net person is quite difficult. A serve here will often result in a weak return, and often a return to your net person (you have "set them up"). Where as a serve to 1, or A, goes to your opponent's forehand, which is much easier to control (and often hit harder), putting your team on the defensive. A ball served very wide can be effective, but if you miss by a bit and leave it as an easy forehand, you have surrendered control of the point. I would serve to 2 about 80% of the time on the deuce side against a right-handed opponent, even one with a good backhand. Remember though, 2 may be the target, but the real goal is to get them to hit the ball in B, so the serve has to land in 2 in such a way that the ball stays in the middle. Something to work on. (hint: use a service position closer to the middle, rather than out wide)

Ad Side: So we have won the deuce point, and we are now serving to the ad side. The right-hander's backhand is now the wide serve (4), and the down the middle (3) is to the forehand. A tricky situation. A serve to 3 places the ball in the middle (B), so they have fewer angles, but it means the shot will probably be harder and better disguised (forehand). A serve wide (4) means the return will likely be cross-court (few players can hit a backhand down the line off a good serve with any regularity), but ball is moving away from the net person and toward the server's backhand (if you are right-handed). So the return coming from B or C both pose problems. You are probably in a bit stronger position if you serve to 4 and make them return from C, but you have to mix it up a bit more on this side. The one shot on the ad side you don't want to see is the returner hitting a forehand out in C (in other words, they ran around their backhand). A forehand from C is the serving team's nightmare, because it is often fast, it can go down the line, up the middle or inside out angle, it is hard to read and it can have a lot of spin (all four weapons coming at you: speed, spin, placement & deception). This means that always serving to 4 will encourage the smart returner to cheat over towards the alley farther and farther. Some serves down the middle are going to be necessary. I like to serve about 60% to 4, and 25% to 3, and the other 15% right at them. Again, this is to right-handers.

Net Play: The net player needs to trust that the server (back court player) is going to set him up. Remember, at the net, your job is to cover the middle of the net (at least your half, if not more, of the middle). This is extremely easy to forget. Net players often get lost covering 1) the alley, 2) the lob, or 3) worse, both. The back player can really help or hurt the cause here. Encourage your net player to cover the middle, even if they get passed. Especially if they get passed. Remember, most of the time that a net player gets passed down the alley, it was due to a poor shot placement from the back court player (i.e you messed up, not them – check your ego, apologize, and encourage them to stay in the middle).

What About Lefties? OK, here come the lefties. Don't you just love them? When you play a lefty/righty combination, where are the forehands? That is the fundamental question. If the forehands are on the outside, you are going to hit to B almost all the time (serves to 2 & 3, returns to B), and avoid A and C. If the forehands are on the inside, you are going to aim for A and C (especially serves to 1

Quote of the Month

"You're not going for a winner, you're trying to win the point. There's a big difference between the two." – Nick Bollettieri



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@
sbqglobal.net](mailto:orindawoodstc@sbqglobal.net)

Head Pro:

Patric Hermanson
PatricTennis@yahoo.com

Associate Pro:

Anna Marie Gamboa
gamboa.tennis@yahoo.com

Junior Tennis Staff:

Anastasia Kaiser
Caitlin Powell
George Kaiser
Maddy Cyler

Weekend Staff:

George Kaiser

Newsletter Editor:

Keith Wheeler

Associate Editors:

Patric Hermanson
Marcy Sharafian

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& 4), and avoid B more, but not totally (there are still advantages to hitting in the middle – like not missing as much as when you hit wide-- even against forehands). Of course hitting your shots to their weakness is not going to be easy, because they are going to try to get you to hit back to their forehands are by the shots they hit you. For example, if the left-hander is serving to the deuce court (that means their forehands are in the middle), they are going to serve down the middle, and that is going to make it very hard to get the balls to the outside. If the left-hander is serving to the ad court, they are going to serve wide, and that is going to make it hard for you to hit down the middle (where their backhands are). Mostly likely, you'll be forced to go crosscourt, back towards their forehand.

Returns: When you are returning, your first goal is to hit as many forehands as possible. Look for the serves that are in the middle of the service box (see below, service mistakes). That's right, give them the edges, especially the edge to your forehand side (again, see article below). Make their backhand target as small as possible (as small as you can consistently get away with). You are not worried about the occasional ace to your forehand side. Let them have those, in exchange for being able to hit more forehands on their more average serves.

When returning, there is tremendous value to hit towards B, using the threat of the alley (you will have to hit some, good percentage is about 20% of the time down the alley) or the lob, as a way to open that middle up. When they have to play the ball from B, either from the net, or the backcourt, they don't have good angles to hit into, and therefore they will probably hit the ball back to you (if you are coving the middle, like you should). Hitting to the middle is also safer, as the net is low, and the court is large. Even if you have to hit to a forehand in the middle (or two, with lefty / righty with forehands in the middle), there are still great advantages to hitting the ball there. Only go wide if 1) you can make it, and 2) you hurt them (limit what they can do). Hitting to a backhand out wide accomplishes this, as few can hit backhands down the line.

Summary: Be really careful about making too many errors. I'll close with the adage ... most winners land on the sides of the court, but winners hit down the middle. That means that it is the team with the fewest errors, not the most winners, that is usually the winner. Hit aggressively, but to big targets (B), with plenty of margin for error (A and C on each side). Good luck out there.

Practicing Returning Aces

The Joke: I was working with a student recently on her return of serve. She was preparing for a mixed doubles match, and wanted to work against a man's serve. So I served. Occasionally, I would pop an ace. After a couple of these, my rather clever, yet brilliant student quipped, "What am I doing here, practicing returning aces?"

A couple of moments of reflection passed, and then we discussed that very statement. In one sense, practicing returning aces is a very good practice. She pointed out the paradox of the statement itself, as by definition, an ace is a ball that was not touched, and cannot be returned. But letting yourself be aced is a very important part of the practice of returning serve. If you are up against a good server, you are going to be aced. If they are really good, you may be aced or overpowered a lot. Your mental / emotional response to that event is going to be crucial to how you return the serves that follow. Even against a great server, about every third serve is returnable, if you aren't so psyched out by the first two unreturnable ones, that is.

The Decision: Perhaps the hardest, and yet one of the most important decisions you make in tennis is, "what shots am I willing to give up." It is a call that many players are simply not mentally strong enough to be able to make, thinking some how relinquishing territory appears weak, or that they are not trying. When in fact, it is one of the best things that you can do to be more competitive, and be a tougher opponent. If we look at fig. 4, I have divided the service box into two areas, A (shaded) & B (assuming the returners are right-handed in this example). B is around the edges, A is in the middle. Here is **the conundrum:** as a server, you should be trying to hit your serves in B. As a returner, you should prepare to hit the balls that are served in A. If a ball lands in A (a service mistake), you should hit it, and hit it well (advantage to the returning team). If you miss a ball that lands in A because you were trying so hard to get a good serve in B

that actually never came, you will not do well in tennis and returning in particular. Or to use baseball terms, you need to wait for a pitch you can hit, and do the best you can to "fight off" the really tough ones. Now since there is "B territory" on both sides of the service box, you are going to have to choose which one of the B sides you are going to cover, and the other side, where you are willing to be aced. This is crucial. Standing in the exact middle gives too much of an advantage to a good server. All servers hit to one side better than the other, even if they are good at hitting both sides. And there is a strategic advantage to hitting to one side as well. Cover the side that gives you the best chance to compete, but never to the extent that you are missing the mistakes that land in A. Those are your points, your gifts, be ready to grab them when they arrive on your doorstep.

The goal is to control large portions of the court, not to win every point (which is impossible, and a foolish endeavor). The goal, after all, is to win the match, and that is much more about picking your battles than wearing yourself out chasing every ball with little hope of success. I like to reference George Washington here, the founder of our country. General Washington lost almost every battle he fought, except the last one (at Yorktown). George kept his eye on the real prize, keeping his army safe and winning the war. He wouldn't get suckered into fights he couldn't win, even if it meant giving up supposedly valuable territory like New York City. So practicing returning aces is great for your game (and pretty darn good for your outlook on life too).

OWTC Fall Junior Tennis Program *September 3-December 14*

The 2012 Fall Junior Clinics begin the week of September 3rd, and will continue thru the week of December 10th. There are no classes the week of November 19-23rd. Head Pro Patric Hermanson and Assistant Pro Anna Marie Gamboa will run the 14-week program.

The Level I and II classes will be taught using aspects of the USTA Quickstart / Ten and Under Tennis Program. Level II will also spend time using Quickstart.

Class Schedule:

Level	Class	Time (s)	One day/week	Two
I	Lil' Ones <i>The Lil' Ones 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.</i>	Tues/Thursday 3:15-4pm	\$150*	\$235*
II	Future Stars Group <i>The Future Stars Group is for our 7 to 10 year old players. The players will be working with Quickstart balls on 36" and 60" courts. Stroke instruction, tennis games, and match play are all part of the curriculum.</i>	Tuesdays 4-5:30pm	\$300*	n/a
III	10s Development Group <i>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 through 14.</i>	Thursdays 4-5:30pm	\$300*	n/a
IV	Tournament Training <i>The Tournament Training Group is an invitation only class. Contact Patric about setting up a try-out.</i>	Wednesdays 4:30-6pm	\$300*	n/a

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

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 update.

Tennis Shoes Required (no black soled shoes that mark the court).

For more information or to sign up, please check the club website, or call Keith or Patric at the Pro Shop (925-254-1065) or you can also e-mail Patric at patrictennis@yahoo.com.

