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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.*

## **Indian Wells (Weather) Report**

Hypothermia was more the topic of the day for the weekend at the Pacific Life Open this year, as a cold blast came through, raining out matches, and challenging everyone to make winter garments out of layering 4-5 summer shirts. The fashions were interesting, but no one was complaining about the look, just the atmospheric conditions. After multiple weeks dominated by rain in Northern California, we were all ready for a little desert relief, but it was not meant to be. When the clouds did finally break on Sunday, however, the view was spectacular, with snow on all the surrounding mountains and beautiful clear (and yes, cold) skies. Still, the tennis was fantastic, with great matches on practically every court as the tournament attempted to make up all the rained out matches from Friday and Saturday. Particularly memorable was the second round match between Carlos Moya and Marat Safin. Hard to believe two players of such talent would meet in the second round, but injuries have limited both their playing time and rankings. It was the babe match of the weekend, with the stands full of adoring women. Or as one female fan said, "This match is hot, hot, hot." Of course the stands were also full for any time Marcus Baghdatis played too. A fine looking gent.

The cold weather could not stop the fine eating however, from LG's steak house to Mikado or Castelli's or the Cliff House, it was all spectacular, and warm inside too, thank God. And you can't beat the shopping on El Paseo or the outlet malls. Much cash was dropped.

Some people braved the cold to play some tennis too, which was of course much easier to brave the cold when you are moving than just sitting and watching someone else move. I must admit, a run I took in the rain was even enjoyable, just not the expected desert experience.

The weather did finally improve on Monday just about in time for most of the group to return to rainy Orinda. OK, our timing wasn't perfect. But it was good to hit the desert anyway, and the pro tennis was fantastic, as usual.

Of course I watched a lot of matches, particularly doubles, to get some new ideas to bring back to the Club. There is a lot of one up, one back being played these days, but not the way our grandmas played it. The net player is very assertive, and the back player works hard to set up the net person for an offensive shot. The players are constantly moving, looking for an opportunity, poaching, playing Australian formation. Very exciting. A great deal can be learned from watching not only the way the pros hit the ball, but also in the strategies they use, in both singles and doubles. And it is just plain fun to see the amazing skill. If you missed this year, come next year!

## **Senior Tournament**

The Orindawoods Senior Championships runs from March 27 through April 2 on all seven of the Club's courts. There will be no court reservations that week, and play will be limited on non-existent between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. There will be some night reservations, that can be pre-empted by tournament matches if the tournament runs late due to weather. Come and watch the great tennis!

## **Spring Junior Program**

Once again Head Pro Patric Hermanson and Pro Philip Laubschure lead the kids in our great Junior Program. Spring Junior Tennis starts the week of April 3. See page 4

## **USTA Senior Results**

Congratulations to Carol Penskar's 3.5 Senior Women's team who won the first round of the playoffs against Walnut Creek A on March 4. The team was scheduled to play in the league final on March 18 (after publication of this fine missive). If we win that one, it is on to bigger and better challenges. Go Team!

## **USTA Adult Season Begins**

Our USTA adult league season is beginning. We have teams in the Ladies 3.0, 3.5 and 4.0 categories, and in the Men's 3.5. It looks like we have four very strong teams this year, so it should be really exciting.

## **Court Usage**

With the great turnout this spring for USTA Adult league tennis, there will be lots of action at the Club on the weekends after 11 a.m.. Our leagues use courts 4, 5 & 6 for match play, usually starting at 11 a.m. and playing until about 2:30 p.m. Occasionally, there is a 2:30 match.

## **Keith, Patric Attend USPTA NorCal Convention**

Executive Tennis Director Keith Wheeler and Head Pro Patric Hermanson attended the USPTA NorCal convention. There were great presentations on CardioTennis (see below), footwork, vision, stroke production and drills to train players to their greatest potential. As usual, it was great to see all of our peers and get some fresh ideas.

## **Cardio Tennis**

CardioTennis is a new workout program being developed by the Tennis Industry Association and the USTA. It is an aerobic workout using tennis as the basic activity. Keith has done the training and is considering offering some CardioTennis classes in the near future. If you are interested in participating in a fitness program style workout that involves tennis please contact Keith, and we will start setting up some classes. It is a great workout, believe me. The focus is on exercise, staying in your heart rate zone, and not on tennis strokes, so all levels would be welcomed and can participate together.

### ***The Volley***

When you watch pro tennis, like many of us have this past month at the Pacific Life Open, it is easy to wonder, "Where have all the volleys gone?" And yet there are still some great volleyers out there, and actually, I think the volley is making a bit of a comeback. It is a great way to shorten a point, in your favor, if used properly. And in club tennis, where the game is primarily doubles, we see lots of volleys. With all this in mind, it is time to look at the volley, what makes it work, and what makes it sometimes challenging, or "a f---ing complete mystery," as Morgan Freeman said about chess in *Shawshank Redemption*.

First of all, the stroke itself is only part of the story. One of the best technical volleyers in our Club is not a particularly great net player, yet, but her "great hands" will serve her well when she learns the second half of the equation, how to move at the net.

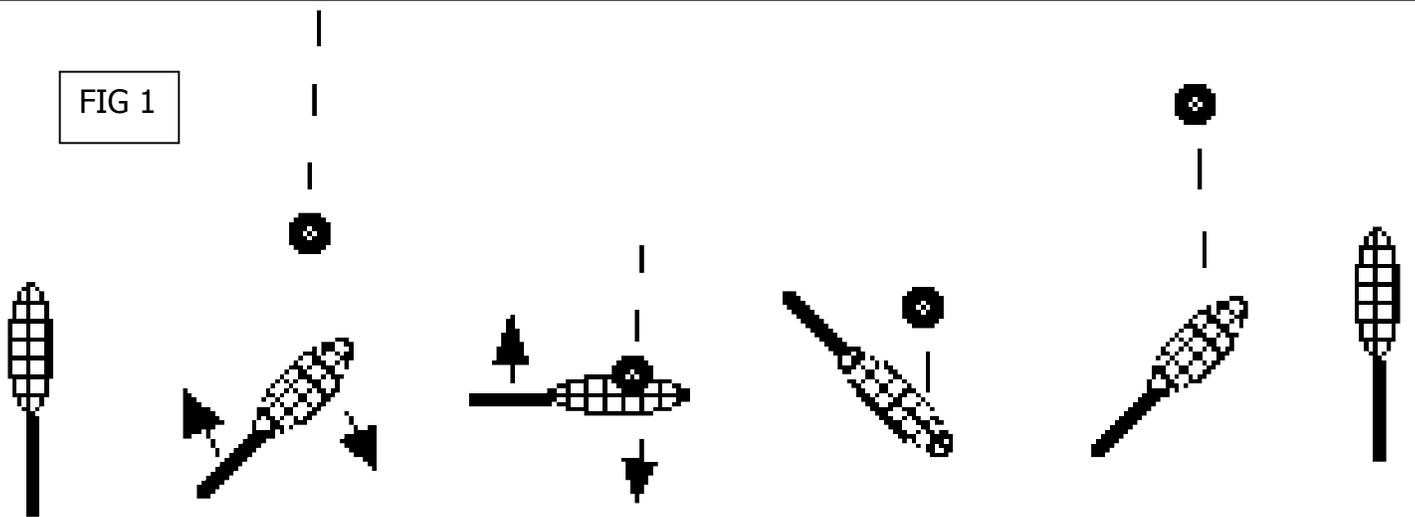
Let's start with how to hit a volley, then move on to how to use these skills most effectively.

The Preparation. A good ready position is essential, on your toes, racquet held high, out in front of you. The key tip here is that your elbows should be in front of your body, not at your sides. This alone will make you a much better volleyer. At no point in the volley should your elbows move back and get next to, or heaven forbid, behind your body. Any side-to-side movement should have the elbows crossing (actually rotating) in front of the body, never behind or to the side. The racquet head should be above your wrist, with the racquet angled up about 120 degrees from your arm (180 would be straight out, 90 would be straight up in relation to the line of your arm). Next, when you see which side the ball is coming to, you should immediately turn about 45 degrees. Do this by turning your inside foot 90 degrees. For a right hander, that means turn your right foot 90 degrees for a forehand volley, your left foot should be unweighted, but don't actually step with it. In other words, don't act like a typical male, and start driving around before you know where you are going. Stop, wait for directions, i.e. see where the ball is going. It is important not to take the racquet back too far, so 45 degrees is about right (see the progression or racquet positions in Fig. 1). At this point it is less important to get the racquet to the contact point and ready to hit than to have the racquet forward so you can give back with the ball when it does arrive.

This is the next crucial point, that the "swing" on the volley is basically backwards. You are going to give with the ball, take speed off, in other words, than ad speed. This is where most people fail, and fail spectacularly. They try to ad pace, and swing. They take their racquet back too far, and then have to bring it forward to meet the ball, thus swinging forward whether they intended to or not. Shocking as it may sound, but the ball should leave your racquet slower than it arrived on the vast majority of volleys. Think of it this way, you are standing at the net, your opponent is at the baseline. They can hit it 78 feet or so and hit the ball in. You have just a bit more than half that distance, say 45 feet. Unless you can hit the ball down, you better hit it easier or it will go long (sometimes you can volley down, and that is the time you might consider adding pace, but it is rare, as your opponent tries to avoid you when you are that close).

The Connection. Most people would call this phase the hit, but I think it is much more useful to call it the connection. If that doesn't lose you, then consider this, you want to create the connection by "moving

FIG 1



without movement". Huh? Let's go back to the preparation, where the racquet was in front of the body, at a 45 degree angle. As the ball approaches, the racquet should move backwards, as the body moves forwards. The racquet head gives with the ball, and moves around, to the inside (frames 2-4 above). The racquet is moving, rotating around the ball, but it isn't moving, the way most people think of moving, forward and backward (i.e. swinging). It is much more like you are catching the ball, rather than hitting it. This is how top players control

### Quote of the Month

*"There is a fine line between a prima donna and a flake, and this line is performance."*

the spin and speed of the ball. A bit firmer, and less give (rotation) if they want the ball to go faster, more turn, more rotation, softer hands, if they want to take more speed off of it.

The Finish. A favorite saying of mine is that you haven't finished a stroke until you are ready for the next one. So on the volley, after you have finished the connection, and the ball is headed for your opponent's side of the court, you need to return to the initial ready position. This is very easy if you haven't moved or swung the racquet, because your arm is still in the same place, out in front, and you simply turn your body back forward and point the tip of the racquet back towards your opponent.

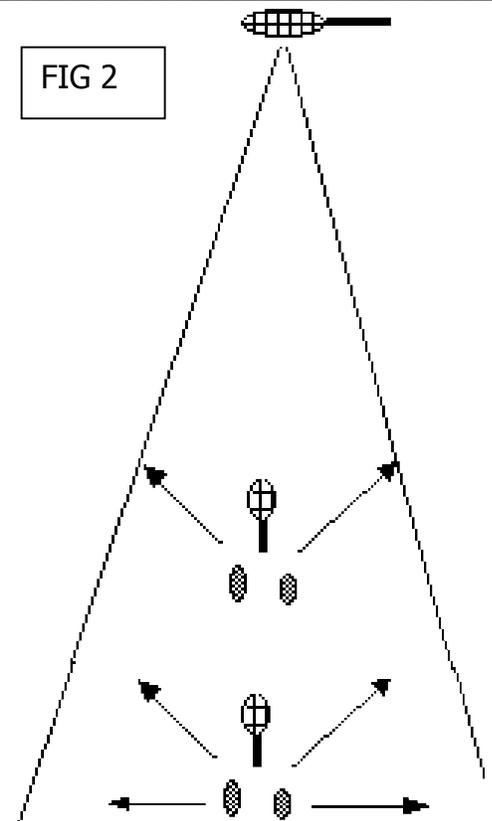
Tactics. As technically beautiful as the above volley is, that alone won't make you a good net player, because it is actually more important to know how to move, and how to defend the court. This is where geometry and physics come into play. Think of playing the net as a series of triangles (fig. 2) and parabolas. If the point at which your opponent is hitting the ball is the apex of the triangle, the two sides are where they can hit the ball. A good net player wants to move in a way that they intercept those lines as far forward as possible. There are two reasons for this, one, the lines are closer together the closer you are to your opponent's point of contact, and second, the ball will be higher (fig. 3), as it has to be "high" to clear the net. The key idea here is that space is more important than time. In other words, being closer when you hit the ball is what makes you good at the net ("if you're not closing, you're

losing"). When you stay back at the baseline, you are choosing time over space. There is much more of the court to cover (space), but you have much more time to do it. This is precisely what gets most baseliner's in trouble when they come to the net, they stay too far back because they put a premium on time, and don't understand the importance of shrinking the space. That will kill you at the net. At the net, you want to stand as close as your opponent will let you. This is where the lob comes in. If your opponent can lob, you can't be as close (same as if they can hit it really hard at you), so you have to stand back a reasonable distance to deal with the lob and the power shot, and then move forward when you see it is a volley, backwards if they lob. Movement is key at the net, and it is movement after they hit the ball. Moving toward their shot on a diagonal (towards the net too) is called closing (Fig 2), It is the key skill to being a good net player. If you don't do it, you won't be very effective at the net, no matter how good your hands are.

In Indian Wells, when a player moved forward to volley, they would often have to stop quickly after they volleyed because they moved forward so well that after they made contact, their momentum would practically have them running into the net. The idea that you take one step and volley is old and out of date. You want to move through the volley with multiple steps, getting close as you can, and get the ball as high as you can at contact (Fig. 3).

Reading. The next skill is really reading the situation. Thus

FIG 2





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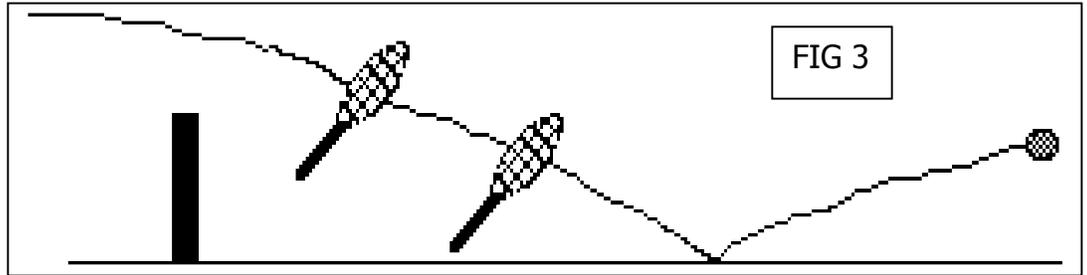
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answering the question, "How close can I stand?" Did I hit them a ball they can lob? (lob over my head – that is key, not just can they get it up in the air. We want short lobs, because we want to hit overheads) If they can't get it over your head, get closer. If yes, stand back a bit farther, but be ready to close if they choose a passing shot instead. Since whether they can lob or not is crucial to net play, it is often best to hit them a ball that is hard to lob, and that ball is usually low, and often short. On top of that, since moving after they hit is key, it is best if the ball isn't moving that fast, so you have more time to adjust to their shot. That is where hitting the ball "slow and low" is a good way to come in to the net. Slow and low is also a difficult shot for your opponent to hit hard and keep it in. Plus, a slower ball gives you more time to adjust, to close.

One final crucial trick. if you are at the net, and someone hits the ball wide to you, move forward, almost directly towards the net. Cut off the angle by moving in, not moving sideways. Sideways takes you out of defensive position, and you won't be able to attack. Forward shortens the distance you move.

To be a great volleyer, work on your volley skills, and then spend a lot of time at the net, learning to move towards the ball, and read the shots. Fear is the biggest challenge. Fear of being passed, fear of being lobbed, fear of being hit with the ball. Be ready, move towards the ball, don't be afraid of losing points by being passed or lobbed (and you also learn when to run away). Points are lost more dramatically at the net, so they make a big impression, but they are lost just as often staying back, and often more frequently. Often playing it safe and staying back isn't safe, and you lose more points. Good luck out there!

### Spring Junior Clinics

The 2006 Spring Junior Clinics begin the week of April 3rd and continue through June 9th. Head Pro Patric Hermanson will again lead the 10-week session with the help of the very talented Philip Laubscher and our junior staff.

Level	Class	Time	One Day/ week	Two Day
I	Lil' Ones (ages 4-6)	Tu/Th 3:15-4pm	\$100/\$115 (mem/non)	\$190/\$205
II	Beginners (ages 7-10)	Tues. 4-5:30pm	\$200/\$225 (mem/non)	n/a
III	Inter. (ages 7-13)	Thurs. 4-5:30pm	\$200/\$225 (mem/non)	n/a
IV	Adv. (invitation only)	Friday 4:30-6pm	\$200/\$225 (mem/non)	n/a

We have factored into the cost of the clinics the potential of two weeks of missed classes due to rain, illness, vacations, etc. In case of questionable weather (rain), please call the Pro Shop for a court condition update. For more information or to sign up, contact Keith or Patric at the Pro Shop (254-1065), on line at [www.orindawoodstennis.com](http://www.orindawoodstennis.com) or at [patricTennis@yahoo.com](mailto:patricTennis@yahoo.com). Tennis shoes are required. No marking black soled shoes.

*Our Winter Session concludes on March 25. There is a one-week break, 3/27-4/2*

### Weekly Club Drop-in Events

*Ladies' Clinic, every Tuesday morning 9:30-10:30 a.m. w/ Patric. Cost: \$5*

*Ladies' Playday, every Tuesday morning 10:30- 12 noon, Courts 1 and 3*

*Men's Clinic, every Thursday morning 9:30-10:30 a.m. w/ Patric. Cost \$5*

*Men's Day, every Thursday morning 10-12 noon, Courts 4-7, and Saturdays, 8-10:30 a.m. Courts. 4-5*

**"I like this place,  
and willingly  
could waste my  
time in it"**

**--William  
Shakespeare**