

These Women Prove That "Tennis is a Lifetime Sport"

BY ANN SMITH

"We have 19 ladies in that group and they give it everything they have," says Linda Kleitch, Local Leagues Coordinator for Collier Tennis. She's speaking about two over-70 age women's teams and says, "They have a greater love of the game than a younger group and appreciate what it can do for them healthwise."

The oldest player in the League is 95. The others range from 70 up; all have played before, some more than others. They play in the USTA Women's 70's, 4.0 League in teams from Sterling Oaks and Longshore Lake Tennis Clubs which play at Longshore Lake Tennis Club.

Pat Bova didn't start playing tennis until her youngest child turned two. She says, "Since the beginning, it has been my passion. I was a faithful wife, a doting parent (now grandparent) and active community volunteer. And tennis never moved

to the back burner; my family and my volunteer work happily accepted my hours on the court."

Another player, Marcha Moore, recalls that there were no competitive sports for women when she went to high school or college. She says, "Women have always had the competitive spirit, and now we have the opportunity to really compete. Tennis and the USTA Leagues have opened that competitive door for all the women in this age group."

After suffering a heart attack on the tennis court five years ago, Sharon Gammell wasn't sure she'd ever play again. But she's back, saying, "I was encouraged by a friend to join the Dream Team of Pelican Bay. Now I am thrilled to be on one of the first 70+ teams in Collier County. I welcome every new day and game!"

As the women play, the balls whiz by with accuracy and finesse. Their games are women's tennis at its best, made up of good-natured rivalry

mixed with power and delicacy in their accurate strokes. After they play, sitting in the clubhouse, their talk may go to grandchildren (some even to great grandchildren) and doctor appointments. But on the courts, it's all about tennis. They don't worry about not being younger; they just move on the court like youngsters.

The Women's 70's League captains are Bobbie Thompson, the Longshore Lake captain, and Ann Smith, the Sterling Oaks captain. They say, "We are planning on lots of good tennis and competitive fun. We want to encourage other clubs to form 70's teams and join us."



Ladies over-70 tennis teams after play at Longshore Tennis Club.

As Kleitch says, "It's a fun, fun wonderful sport. It's truly a lifetime sport." These teams prove that every week. For more information, call Kleitch at 239-348-9827.