



Pickleball popular at Rowan County Senior Games



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SALISBURY – Dozens of Rowan County residents have an addiction, and the only prescription is more pickleball.

Created in 1965, the sport borrows elements of badminton, tennis and table tennis. In recent years, pickleball has exploded in popularity locally, leading to its inclusion in the Rowan County Senior Games three years ago.

More than 80 people are signed up to participate in this year's Senior Games pickleball tournaments. On Monday, the pickleball singles competition was held at the J.F. Hurley YMCA on Jake Alexander Boulevard. The doubles tournament will be held today, and the mixed doubles on Wednesday.

"I've never seen anything like what this is," said Phyllis Loflin-Kluttz, coordinator of the Senior Games and Silver Arts. "It's an addiction, and it's just so popular."

Monday's events involved multiple rounds of play in each age bracket. First-, second- and third-place finishers will qualify for the state competition later this year.

Some competitors, such as Jon Post, are longtime players of racquet sports.

“I had an injury that made me realize I couldn’t play tennis,” Post said. “I used to play a lot of tennis, and this sport is really great for folks that have some physical limitations.”

Generally, pickleball is a lower-impact sport than tennis, he said. On a pickleball court, the boundary lines are 30 feet apart. On tennis courts, it’s 60 feet. Still, the smaller courts don’t eliminate all soreness after a long day of play, Post said.

Post said he plays doubles games with his brother David, an attorney and Salisbury city councilman. As in the case of the Posts, a player who is significantly younger than his partner plays in the lower age bracket.

“He’ll be playing down into my bracket because I’m a lot younger than my brother,” Jon Post joked.

Several yards away, Karen Pridmore and Jane Brittain were wrapping up a gold medal match in Monday’s singles tournaments. Like the Posts, Pridmore and Brittain will team up during the doubles matches today.

Shot after shot, Brittain smacked the ball past Pridmore with laser-like precision. Brittain finished first in the 60-64 age bracket. Pridmore finished second in the bracket.

“You try to pick out their weaknesses, whether it be a short shot at the net, and then you work on that weakness,” Pridmore said. “Jane did that, and she beat me really, really bad.”

Asked about their chances in the doubles tournament today, Pridmore and Brittain said, “It’s anybody’s game” and, “We’re all here to have fun.”

Renita Ritchie, who finished third in the 60-64 bracket, provided a different assessment.

“They’ll make it far in the tournament,” Ritchie said.

Dean Williams of Thomasville said the doubles tournaments usually draw a larger crowd than singles event because the former is less strenuous.

“If you get against a player that can really paint the corners, it can actually be pretty physically demanding,” he said about singles matches.

The Rowan County Senior Games pickleball tournaments continue at 9 a.m. today at the YMCA.

Results from Monday’s games are:

- **Women 60-64:** Gold, Jane Brittain; silver, Karen Pridmore; bronze, Renita Ritchie.
- **Women 65-69:** Gold, Ann Cline.
- **Women 70-74:** Gold, Yvonne Barger; silver, Pat Jackson.
- **Women 80-84:** Gold, Phyllis Faires.
- **Men 50-54:** Gold, Dave Hibbard.
- **Men 55-59:** Gold, John Post; silver, Mark Rimmer.
- **Men 60-64:** Gold, Darrell Gore; silver, John Peterson; bronze, Dean Williams.
- **Men 65-69:** Gold, David Post; silver, Jerry Teter; bronze, Mike Rimmer.
- **Men 70-74:** Gold, Jack Stine. silver, Pete Harvey; bronze, Steve Potter.
- **Men 75-79:** Gold, Jim Epperson; silver, Paul Mehmed.

For more information about the Rowan County Senior Games, call 704-216-7780 or email Loflin-Kluttz at phyllis.kluttz@rowancountync.gov or assistant coordinator Savannah Daniel at savannah.daniel@rowancountync.gov.

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