

RON PERDUE



At 82, Ron Perdue has lost a lot of friends, to pickleball.

The Tulsa tennis player is a rarity on the court. Many athletes are forced to give up the sport as their joints weaken, but Perdue is not immune to the ailments of aging.

In the 1990s, Perdue could barely move on the court. He spent more than a decade treating his sore body with the usual prescription of shots and draining until that, too, took its toll.

“Then came the knee replacements. In 2008 it was the right knee, then in 2015 the left knee,” Perdue said. “It’s really worked for me — the replacement of a few original issued parts.”

For now, a dose of good luck and a few replacement parts are keeping him in the game.

Perdue started playing tennis in high school nearly 65 years ago. He played baseball most of his childhood, but he attended a free lesson in the park and was immediately hooked. He started competing during his senior year of high school and never looked back.

Perdue enjoys the competition, and often finds success. He took four gold medals in the 2016 and 2018 Oklahoma Senior Games winning men’s singles and doubles both years. Perdue and his partner took another gold in men’s doubles at the National Senior games in 2017 and Perdue took second in men’s singles the same year.

“My most successful years have been in my 80s because all the guys that used to beat me can no longer play,” Perdue said. “The key to really being good in old age is to outlive everybody. That’s really the challenge, to keep going.”

In June, Perdue finished 7th in singles and 4th in doubles with partner Glenn Williamson from Arkansas at the 2-10 National Senior Games.. And this year, he also played on the Royal Express softball team, which is made up of men who are 80 and older.

The camaraderie is as fun as the game itself, Perdue said. Whether it’s his teammates on the softball field or his partner on the court, Perdue said sports is the highlight of his day.

He teamed up with a new tennis partner for nationals this year after his longtime partner died of a stroke last year, on the court during a match.

“I hope I go that way,” Perdue said. “It’s the joy of my life, besides my family of course. It’s fun and it’s the motivation that keeps me going.”

Oklahoma Senior Games competitions occur annually in September and October. This year, competitions will be held in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Shawnee, Norman, Yukon and Warr Acres.

Events include three-on-three basketball, track and field, golf, swimming, water walking, 5K and 10K runs, 5K power walk, 5K race walk, bowling, tennis, table tennis, golf croquet, shuffleboard, cycling, cornhole, badminton, archery, pickleball, racquetball, softball and triathlon. Participants age 50 and older will compete in categories by age and gender.

Oklahoma Senior Games qualifies athletes for National Senior Games competition held every two years. About 300 athletes who qualify in 2020 will represent Oklahoma in the National Senior Games competition November 5-18, 2021 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

For more information visit www.okseniorgames.com or call (405) 821-1500.