

Tennis Enthusiast Takes On New Court ... Pickleball!

There is a sweet sound when the polymer pickleball hits the composite paddle during a serve, chopping through the air and over the net during an intense game of pickleball. Nancy Pound, Innsbrook Resort property owner, reflects on the sport and the journey she's made from professional tennis instructor to committed pickleball enthusiast.

"For many years I played tennis competitively," said Pound. "I taught professionally with Woodsmill Tennis Club and was number one in the ladies singles of the U.S. Tennis Association-Missouri Valley for my age bracket in many multi-state tournaments. I also received a gold medal in Senior Olympics for my age bracket."

As director of tennis for the Woodsmill Tennis Club in Chesterfield for 29 years, Pound knows a lot about the sport of tennis since she has extensive experience instructing and coaching other players. She was thrilled with the competitive nature of tennis and also enjoyed making new friends during competitions from all across the U.S., even making friends from Hawaii.

"There was a lot of comradery in nationals and it was a privilege to have a chance to be a part of that," said Pound.

Although she still may play tennis occasionally, a new sport appeals to her competitive nature - pickleball.

"A group of us who live at Innsbrook started playing pickleball," added Pound. "It didn't take long for me to become captivated by this sport. It's an excellent form of exercise and you can be as social or as competitive as you want to be."

Her tennis game has even improved since she began playing pickleball.

"Pickleball is close up and has improved my net play. It's all about reflexes and reaction time. I have a natural top spin that I'm able to serve deep. It's cutting on the inside and I aim for the ball to break out or in, depending on where I'm trying to reach. My lob serve goes high and bounces high so it's difficult for someone to get a return on the ball."

A lob serve is a commonly used serve, going high over the net and into the back corners of the court. There are a lot of areas to improve and teach with the game of pickleball.

"Many people think of the sport as an older person's sport and that's all wrong," said Pound. "When we first opened the courts at Innsbrook, we had more than 100 people of all ages sign up for a clinic. Across the country, there are pro leagues for men and women of all ages who travel the country, playing pickleball. Pickleball players can be quite competitive and it's not just for tennis players. Many athletes, including professional golfers, also enjoy the sport because it's physically more active."

Pound was anxious to get a chance to discuss the sport and this winter's colder temps have not deterred her from playing. When there are extreme temperatures or a lot of precipitation outdoors, she finds an indoor court to keep her game strong.

She'll soon have a new home court to play on this spring as Innsbrook Resort has eight new outdoor pickleball courts under construction. That's eight more opportunities for Pound to expand her skills and serves, making more friends with each tip and trick, and teaching all ages the benefits of constant improvement in any sport, especially one that's trending across the nation.