

SMASHING SERVES AND WINNING MATCHES

By Dave Taylor



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When Brenda Clayton is smashing serves and winning matches on the tennis court, she's an energetic 36-year-old, always looking to improve her game and be in the hunt for a state title. Her mind is focused on the match and her opponent and absolutely not on the fact that she hasn't actually been 36 years old since the mid-90s.

"I still think I'm 36," said Clayton, who's now 60. "I'm not old," she said, "except for the fact that I am."

Clayton, a CPA in Owensboro with an office overlooking 2nd Street, has decided that she's going to be young as long as possible, choosing to work and play and enjoy life like she won't eventually slow down.

So far, it's working.

When she's not in her office working on taxes or handling the finances of her clients, she can be found on a tennis court somewhere, and most often at Centre Court, the indoor tennis complex where her husband Noel gives tennis lessons.

"I call myself a tennis junkie," she said. "I can be on four or five teams at once."

She plays on teams that compete in the United States Tennis Association (USTA) based on age group (18 and over, 40 and over, and 55 and over) and skill level (1.5 beginner to 7.0 a touring pro).

Clayton is a 4.0, which is very competitive. Women at level 4.5 are often freshly graduated from a college tennis program. She also competes, and often beats, women much younger than her.

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She and her husband were both athletes growing up, and Brenda even played tennis at the University of Evansville, but once the couple married and had their two boys the focus shifted toward taking the kids to games and matches instead of playing in their own. After about an 18 year hiatus, she took up tennis again.

"I kind of started beginner lessons, you know, I hadn't played forever," she said. "I'd been on the court but it was mainly picking up balls while my kids were hitting them."

That was in 2012 and she's playing strong, but still working to improve every day.

"I'm always trying to get better," she said. "Right now I'm trying to learn how to serve correctly. I think I had it back there whenever I was younger, in college I was serving correctly, but those muscle memories you forget, so that's my mission for the year."

Setting and working toward goals helps keep her in shape, and she doesn't let people's assumptions about age tell her what she can and can't do.

"I mean I'm telling you, I want to be 80 and I want to be on the tennis court," she said.

Many of her friends have the same mindset.

"I have friends of all ages that play," she said.

One friend is 80 and still works out and plays tennis and makes a point to stay physically active.