

GAME, SET, AND MATCH AT VILLAGEWALK

by Melvin Thomas

Tennis is alive and well at VillageWalk, a relatively new gated community of 1,177 homes in central Sarasota County. VillageWalk is located 3 miles south of Clark Road, nestled between I-75 and Honore Ave.

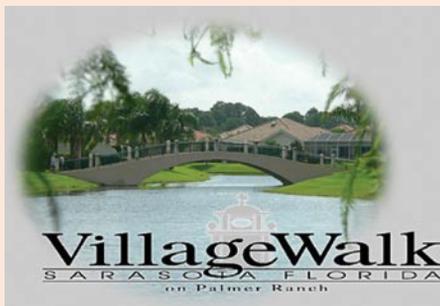
When the developers of VillageWalk, DeVosta Homes, first announced its plans, it caught the eye of many tennis players in the area.

Of the 2,500 residents, about 200 are active tennis players. The courts that DeVosta built are regarded as some of the finest in the 2-county area. Six hard-true courts, with underground watering and all the amenities, plus water fountains, wind screens, lights, shoe washers, shaded canopies, gazebo, and bleachers.

Interesting groups have formed over the last eight years. Play usually starts about 8:00 a.m. three or four days a week with four or five courts of senior men organized by **Tom Jalovec**. He schedules the groups, makes pairings, and "you'd better show up or you'll be left off the next time!"

During the next time slot, 9:30 to 11:00, another loose-assembled group of senior men usually play three or more times a week depending on SunCoast Men's Senior League schedules.

At the 11:00 time slot, the "Big Boys" take one or two courts. They usually consist of the better senior players in VillageWalk led by **Joe Bachmann**, the current leader of soft court, hard court, indoors 70+ singles in the United States. Joe plays at



many of the Sarasota courts and travels for tournaments and exhibition matches, but he can usually find good competitive players to fill out his dance card when he plays at VillageWalk.

One local resident, **Julian Link**, is currently ranked #1 in the 35+ age group in Florida. He played in the 2011 Sarasota Open. Julian can often be seen practicing at the VillageWalk courts, and on occasion has had **Jimmy Arias** as a guest for practice matches. Julian also coaches his son **Joey**, a 14-year old, who is getting taller and better as residents of VillageWalk watch his development with interest.

Not to be overlooked, many good women's doubles matches fill in the schedule of day-time play.

Team play is a big part of tennis life at VillageWalk: three men's teams participate in the SunCoast Senior Men's Tennis League and one Ladies' team plays in the Tri-City League.

Besides all the players of the above

mentioned teams, many individuals have stepped up to play a role in the tennis world at VillageWalk. For example **Al Frankel** serves on the Activities Committee and keeps them informed on the physical condition of the courts, repairs that are needed, and the social side of play when it comes to abiding by the court rules. **Mary Merritt** keeps the bulletin board up-to-date and in the past has sponsored tennis activities such as Round Robins and team parties for the entire tennis community. **Harold Merritt** keeps an eye on the physical components of the courts, keeping scoreboards, wind socks and shoe washers in top working condition.

Of the many amenities in VillageWalk such as workout room, meeting rooms, post office, beauty and barber shop, library, lagoon and lap pools, gas station and cafe, the tennis courts are one of the favorites. After a rousing match of doubles, players meet in the cafe for coffee or drinks. The cafe also provides a good meeting place for VillageWalk teams and their visiting opponents.

So, serve them up! We're ready to play at VillageWalk.

Melvin Thomas is a tennis enthusiast, having played for over 50 years. In his northern life he was an editor, author, publisher, and teacher. In Sarasota, he has owned and operated the House of Maps and still assists his son in the business.

